If You Want Romance, Read a Book

by Wanderlust3988

Summary

**I realize this has been plagiarized and is being sold on Amazon under the author name Maxim Moscotin, and a plagiarism claim has been filed. Whoever you are, please have some integrity as a writer and as a human being. If nothing else, please don’t undersell someone’s work for $3.00. I’ve always believed in the principle that you either sell it for what it’s worth or share it for free, where here I’ve done the latter. Given my line of work, this is not what I thought I would be filing an intellectual rights infringement over. Maxim if you’re reading this, give me a shout, I’d be more than happy to give you a writing lesson, oh, and a few tips in basic human decency XD.**

You never realized that you hadn’t given any thought to what you wanted in a relationship until you found yourself agreeing to marry Seto Kaiba after having spent less than a day with him.

You could have decided differently, but Seto Kaiba had already decided he wanted you, and he always got what he wanted.

You wondered if you really ever had any other choice.

Notes

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Hi there! I’m not entirely sure if that's how I’m supposed to start the notes, I haven’t written a fanfic for a very long time now so please bear with me.

If you came for a sweet and short fic, this is probably not it, my apologies, this just seems to go on and on. This also for the greater part isn't the healthiest of relationships though it does grow to be. So if you're into that sort of thing, and lots of drama, you've come to the right place :)

The first part of the chapter explores in quite a bit of detail the reader's character, including temperament, response to certain situations, social standing as well as her own power and influence. This will come into play during later chapters and give more perspective and understanding of her actions and decisions within her relationship with Kaiba. I also wanted to off-set the power dynamic Kaiba usually has in relationships by adding a character who was just as hard headed as him and matched him in wealth and influence.

Enjoy!

Note that the Kaiba is much older here than in the actual series.

Disclaimer: I do not own Yu-Gi-Oh! and no profit will be made from this story.

See the end of the work for more notes.
“Ruthless young CEO dismisses entire board of directors of major Japanese corporation.”

“Japanese-English actress/CEO acquires Japanese gaming company in cold-blooded M&A.”

“Evil Heiress – AS-IF!”

“True nature of the Nation’s Fairy– oh for fuck's sake, we are back to this again?” You didn’t even bother finishing that headline. The pure and innocent image the media had constructed for you, only to profit from tearing it down every so often with fabricated scandals, just so you can build it back up again was becoming a vicious circle, one that was really starting to become a thorn in your side.

There were quite literally, hundreds more of these, in more languages than you knew how to read. Flying back to Domino to face a media shit-storm – for the lack of a better word – seemed to be the perfect end to the long and bloody legal battle you were looking forward to putting behind you. It wasn’t exactly how you had wanted to spend your morning, though not something totally unexpected. The takeover was hostile after all and the board members you had removed were incredibly powerful and equally influential men.

Who you were upset by weren't the dimwitted reporters who wrote the terrible articles or the half-witted editors who allowed them to be published. After all as the media, creating buzz was what they were paid to do. And practically anything that involved you was guaranteed to garner the public’s attention and sell. Who you were infuriated by was your own, incompetent, overpaid PR department, who despite being specifically advised to prevent this exact mess, months before the actual gong-show of an acquisition unfolded, failed to do exactly that. You had granted them the power to use the entire weight of your corporation to take care of the resulting media backlash, and yet you come back to this. You were insulted.

“Why am I reading these headlines?” you paused, pinching the bridge of your nose, trying to reiterating the question. “Exactly, why do these headlines exist for me to read?” The head of your PR department instinctively recoiled as you approached her. “Nagano, what exactly have you and your department been doing,” you continued in hushed tone, “THAT THESE ARTICLES HAVE COME TO MAKE THE FRONT PAGE OF SO MANY MAJOR NEWSPAPERS AND WHEN I SPECIFICALLY HIRED YOU TO PREVENT THIS?” You bellowed. You spun around back to your desk, swiftly pushing all the newspapers piled on your desk on to the floor, clearing out the contents of your table in the process. “Get rid of these. I’ll give you until the end of the day to have this mess taken care of. If by before the inauguration ceremony tomorrow, I’m able to find even one article on a tabloid, portal site or anywhere, you and your team will be replaced before tomorrow morning. Is that understood?” She nodded furiously, scrambling to pick all the newspapers with the other two members of her team present and all but flew out of the office.

What this whole commotion was about was your recent hostile acquisition of your late maternal grandfather’s gaming corporation. The company was being run by a panel of corrupt, conceited air-heads, full of internal scandals, slush funds and absolutely no concept of how an organization should be run. It was on the verge of internal collapse and potential bankruptcy when you salvaged it from their hands. They, as expected were in permanent denial about the company’s situation and you refused to stand by idly while your grandfather’s life’s work crumbled in front of you. The takeover of course was not solely for sentimental reasons, the technology the development team was developing was very promising and the company employed some very talented individuals.
Unfortunately none of the talent or technology was being applied or managed properly, causing the company to lose many talented individuals to places like Kaiba.corp.

Being from the entertainment industry; an actress as well as the CEO of a renowned, multi-billion dollar entertainment agency, you had no real experience or knowledge in the field of gaming and development. So you had replaced the board members you removed with competent executives you had personally scouted that were knowledgeable in the industry and capable of leading the company on your behalf. Obviously, you didn’t blindly trust them, just because someone was good at their job, didn’t make them trustworthy. If anything, it made them more susceptible to and capable of sabotage.

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By mid-day, the out of control field-day the media was having at your reputation’s expense, showed no signs of slowing down. By now you had your PR teams from foreign branches working on this regardless of their time difference. The PR and legal team leads and department heads from Tokyo and Domino was gathered in your office on the plush chairs surrounding your glass coffee tables furiously working on stopping the media from manufacturing anymore garbage and threatening to sue the publishers of existing articles for defamation unless they have them removed.

“Ma’am, there’s a Mr. Ishikawa on the line for you.” Your personal assistant informed you.

“Put him through.”

Finally someone competent from the media, you thought, putting the call on loudspeaker. Renji Ishikawa was the vice-president of one of the major broadcasting stations of Japan, someone you’ve known for quite a while and had a mutually beneficial relationship with.

“Afternoon, Renji.” You greeted.

“I’ve been trying to get a hold of you all morning! Where have you been?”

“Yes, well, I’ve been slightly preoccupied. Hopefully you’ve had a better morning than me?”

You heard him snort. “Hardly, we’ve been playing damage control for you all morning. Father has been calling all his friends and associates to keep them from publishing – well, you know. You’ve made enemies in some very high places this time.” His father was the president of the broadcasting company and someone you felt very fortunate to have on your court, especially at times like this.

“Yes I was pleased to see that your group’s newspaper was absent from my desk this morning,” you joked.

“I was actually quite surprised by the uproar, considering how discreetly the legal suit was finalized. I didn’t think the ex-board members would make a move this late.”

“Hmm, must have been the calm before the storm. They knew I couldn’t properly reveal their corruption at the risk of jeopardizing the company’s image further. It’s also the inauguration ceremony tomorrow, so strategically speaking, today’s perfect timing to attack.” You paused for a moment before continuing. “Seriously though, thank you. I’ll have my assistant forward you my official statement on this, I’m assuming that’s what you’re calling about?”


“Oh, Renji, before I let you go, the idol group you’ve been harassing me for an interview with, I’ll
let you have it. You’re also welcome to choose any other artist if you’ve changed your mind.” Your corporation’s reputation needed to remain unscathed first for the careers of your artists to survive. Besides, Renji and his company had gone out of their way to help you before you had even requested it, and you had wanted to express your gratitude. That and your ego wouldn’t allow you to be indebted to someone.

Your company was one of the leading talent agencies in Asia, the largest in Japan, having created and housing some of the biggest names in the industry. The offer you were making was a very generous one.

“We really didn’t do it in exchange for anything.” He said politely.

“I’m quite aware; this is just my way of showing my appreciation. Discuss it with the president and let me know?”

“Absolutely!” He sounded thrilled as you ended the call.

Well at least having a major broadcasting corporation like that speaking in your favour ought to make a serious dent against the accusations the smaller companies were making. It would also significantly sway the public sentiment back in your favour, which was critical right now. For the first time today, something was actually working in your favour!

That victory lasted about five minutes. Less than five minutes from your phone conversation ending, one lead from your PR team came up to your desk looking quite frantic, practically shoving a tablet with an article on it at you, blabbering something about a dating scandal.

You sighed; for the most part you weren’t fazed by this new development. At least, you weren’t fazed until you actually read the article. After reading it, you were hysterical.

Dating scandals, that is groundless rumours and articles claiming that you were dating someone or involved with someone surfaced every couple of months. It was the most commonly used ‘weapon’ tabloids used to attack you with. Usually, if you ignored it until the topic went away or issued an official statement denying their claims, the general public including your fans would be content. Usually, the claims were unsubstantiated and were merely one sided speculation by the media.

This time it wasn’t. The article had read something to the effect of how you were involved with a twenty-something year old actor in a secret relationship. It had also gone on to elaborate how you had been intimate with him to a disturbing degree. What made this much worse than any of the articles before it was that the actor in question had been the one to bring the story to the press. With this article being backed up by a ‘statement’ admitting the situation by one of the parties involved, it made it much more believable, and the comment section was exploding with tens of thousands of negative comments, the majority of them directed at you.

Great. Now I have another deranged nutjob conspiring against me. This day just keeps getting better and better.

What was worse, you hardly had any recollection of the man. You had a faint memory of him previously being signed with your company before his contract expired, and he wasn’t offered a renewal due to some complications. To confirm your suspicions, you asked your assistant to send up a talent manager who you vaguely remembered as having been the actor’s assigned manager.

While you waited impatiently, you couldn’t help but wonder what you were more concerned about. This fake dating scandal that had the potential to destroy your character and make all your fans turn against you – and a mob of angry fans weren’t a matter to be taken lightly – or the agenda you knew your current board members were going to be thrilled to push on you in light of this recent
scandal. A recurring theme at your recent board meetings, much to your displeasure, seemed to be the status of your personal relationships. In addition to the chaos you were already dealing with during the transition involved with the acquisition, your board of directors had the leisure to concern themselves with your love life. At any given opportunity, they would criticize how all the scandals that regularly surfaced targeting you, despite being proven false, were casting an unstable and irresponsible image of the company’s leadership and could also endanger your own reputation if it continued. They never failed to remind you how each time, the fake claims being made against your character were progressively becoming more damaging. For a young actress who was single, an affair was the most interesting thing the media could possibly ‘reveal’ to the public. Potential romance made for a compelling story and promiscuity even more so by scandalizing the public. Though the media would never truly stop harassing you for one thing or the other, the board believed that finding a suitable partner and permanently settling down would divert the attention away from your personal life for the most part. Once you were permanently off the market, you simply would not be as interesting. That and it would give you a more mature image. You’ve always had choice words towards these suggestions, but taking into consideration the lengths the most recent attack had gone to slander you, you couldn’t help but find yourself agreeing with their words.

You massaged your temples weighing your options. A trophy husband with no other purpose besides giving your position the illusion of stability that you couldn’t have fathomed tolerating a day ago, was beginning to sound like a great idea right about now.

Upon having the manager you had summoned confirm that the actor was indeed previously signed with you, before being denied renewal due to some DUI incidents and rude comments that required several public apologies, you immediately stormed out of the office. On your way out, you barked a command to the legal team to prepare for a defamation and sexual harassment lawsuit that would run the publication company that had wrote the article out of business.

“If you want something done right, you got to do it yourself.” you cursed as you made a phone call to a close friend, though perhaps ‘close friend’ wasn’t the best way to describe the relationship. “Sorryu, it’s me. Are you in Japan? Great! I need a person found and a statement retracted. Tell your men to not hurt him; I don’t need him saying later that I bullied him into submission by sending a mob boss after him. Also, please have someone trail him for the next couple months so he can’t injure himself and accuse me of doing it later. Do you think you could do that for me?” He agreed and you sent him the information he needed to find the lying cheat.

As the evening went on, the ‘corporate scandal’ relating to the takeover was for the most part, over. Many major broadcasting stations and newspapers had released your official statement where you had been forced to reveal at least to some extent your justification behind dismissing the former board members, which to your surprise had worked in your favour in swaying the public opinion. You were even being praised for your efforts at attempting to restore a great Japanese corporation to its former state. In the end, the controversy damaged the reputations of the members who raised the issue than your own.

You thanked everyone on your PR and legal teams for their hard work and sent them home for the night, deciding to wrap things up on your own.

By the end of the night, the actor was tracked down and his statement retracted, and the dating scandal was also sorted. The actor had explained – or rather forced to say – that his earlier statement was a way of trying to get revenge for his contract not being extended. Overnight you received overwhelmingly positive messages from your fans, many apologizing for not believing you. You tried to get to as many as you possibly could, and didn’t realize you had worked through
the night until your assistant came back to find you just as she had left you at your desk the evening before.

When the inauguration ceremony rolled around, the media storm was finally over. Though between your jetlag and your severe lack of sleep during the past few weeks, you were basically a zombie running purely on adrenaline and energy drinks and you could barely see straight. You were one cup of coffee away from giving yourself a heart attack and you looked down at the martini in your hands wondering whether it was safe to drink it over what was already in your system.

Conversing with businessmen in drab suits with drabber personalities about ever duller topics was slowly killing you inside. When you had finally pulled yourself away from a group, a taller gentleman – much taller than you – with blue eyes and dark brown hair approached you. He was dressed in a white tailored suit and wore a very blank expression on his face. He introduced himself as Seto Kaiba, but of course you already knew that.

He congratulated you on the acquisition, saying something to the effect of ‘how he was impressed by an artist such as yourself being able to accomplish such a feat as successfully overtaking a renowned gaming company.’ Ouch? His presence was very intimidating, even to you. You were considering whether or not to take insult for the way the word ‘artist’ had rolled off his tongue when he continued, adding that he was thoroughly impressed by the way you had handled the media frenzy. Okay, that was definitely a compliment, you thought. Not that you needed his validation, but from what you had heard of him, this was very uncharacteristic of him, so you were internally doing a little dance.

Before much conversation, you two were re-joined by other businessmen and some women again, wanting to get on yours and Kaiba’s good books. Despite his seemingly calm disposition, listening to the conversations between Kaiba and the other businessmen, you realised that he was actually quite frightening. As much as you enjoyed watching him tear apart the other businessmen in a very cool and composed manner, you did begin to wonder what it would be like, if he was actually angry, to have his wrath directed at you. The thought sent chills down your spine and you dismissed the idea as quickly as it had occurred to you. He was definitely charming, but equally terrifying.

As the night progressed your condition was getting increasingly worse. There was an uncomfortable pressure in your chest which was stopping you from breathing properly, you felt light headed and your vision was blurring. It would be improper to leave your own inauguration early, so you pushed yourself to hold yourself together. Being forced to stand in heels that were cutting off your blood circulation to your feet for a number of hours wasn’t helping much either.

At one point during the night, your dizziness had gotten so bad that you had briefly leaned on Kaiba’s forearm – the one he was holding his drink with – to support yourself. You thought you had caught him looking down at you with the corner of your eye but you weren’t certain. He didn’t object or make any comment or gesture to address it so you hoped he hadn’t noticed which, actually was a stupidly optimistic idea.

When the nightmare of a night finally ended, and the guests had finally left, you were ecstatic. You turned to leave the hall yourself, when in your exhausted state, you tripped over your scarlet gown, falling forward. You closed your eyes, preparing for impact with the marble floor – much too over this day to bother catching yourself –, but instead the feeling of being suspended in mid-air greeted you. Slightly surprised, you opened your eyes to see a strong grip encircling your arm above the elbow, holding you up. You swung around to see who the hand belonged to, but the rapidness of your motion caused the blood to rush up to your head, the momentary black out forcing your knees to give out. You felt another arm gripping your other shoulder, forcing you to
stand up as you clutched the side of your head, willing the spinning sensation to stop.

“Are you alright?” You heard a rough voice question through your haze. It didn’t sound like it belonged to any of your staff.

“Yes, I should be.” You replied before looking up. You eventually looked up, trying to focus your doubling vision on the person towering over you. When your vision finally cleared up, you recognized the person was Seto Kaiba. You had wanted to thank the person for helping, but realizing who it was, you found it difficult to form the words. You immediately became aware of how close he was standing; you had inadvertently closed the distance between the two of you when you had swung around. You could practically feel his breath. He didn’t look very pleased to be there. Despite the frustration written on his face, he guided you a few steps to sit in one of the velvet chairs outside the hall, on the interior balcony of the hotel’s second floor. Sitting down for the first time in hours actually felt a lot better than you could have possibly imagined.

“Don’t you need to go to the hospital?” his voice sounded slightly irritated.

“So that my board members can accuse me of being incapable of taking care of myself, and use my over exhaustion and poor health as justification to depose me from my position? I don’t think so.” You spoke avoiding eye contact. “If I’m lucky they’ll force me into making an heir before my health declines further from over exhaustion, but considering I still haven’t completed their assignment of finding a husband, I don’t see how that’s going to work.” Either as a result of your uncharacteristic nervousness or weariness, you had said much more than you had intended to. You immediately regretted it, especially mentioning the issue concerning a husband. A simple ‘no, thank you’ would have sufficed, idiot.

From what you had learned of Kaiba during the course of the night, he was impatient, rude, self-centered and seemed the type to never inconvenience himself with helping someone. You had expected him to leave by now.

He raised an eyebrow. “A husband?” he pressed on, seemingly intrigued.

“Yes, a husband. You know, what a man becomes when he signs a marriage registration.” You slightly snapped. Your better judgement told you that you shouldn’t have, but you were so annoyed at yourself for having let that information slip that you unknowingly directed your frustrations at Kaiba.

“Yes.” He growled lowly gritting his teeth. “I am quite aware of what a husband is. I had meant why you needed one. You’re very young.” Compared to Kaiba, you were quite young, you had read somewhere that he was almost twenty-nine and you had just turned twenty-one.

“My board believes being settled would cast an image of maturity.” You simply replied, dancing around the actual issue, not wanting to give away any more details. Wishing you had never mentioned it in the first place.

He stared at you, deep in thought for a few moments, calculating.

“Are you alright to walk?” he suddenly inquired.

“Uh, yes.” You said weakly, pushing yourself off the chair. He tried to hold you up for support but you insisted you could walk on your own. That independence lasted a good thirty seconds until you made it to the top of the ornate, marble stairwell which led to the hotel’s lobby. When you looked down, your vision became hazy again, and the steps all blurred together. You looked over to your left to hold the railing but Kaiba was standing on that side. It would wound your pride to ask for
help but then again, so would falling down the stairs face first.

“Could you – ” before you could finish asking, Kaiba already held your shoulders on either side. You looked up to see that his face was void of any facial expression. Good, you thought, at least he doesn’t appear to be angry or irritated.

He helped you down the stairwell, through the lobby and into your car.

The whole ordeal had been a wordless affair, which you were grateful for. You were upset, no literally internally screaming for having imposed on him, especially during your first encounter but made a mental note to send something to his office to communicate your appreciation. Random as it was, the thought of Kaiba scowling at a basket of flowers on his desk made you laugh hysterically, most likely causing your driver to think you were insane.

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The next morning you woke up to your phone ringing incessantly. Your head was throbbing as you stared at the time on your phone; face still buried in your pillow, angry at having been woken up. The clock read seven thirty-two. You were late, you were never late. You answered your phone to the head of your PR team losing her mind, hysterically babbling something incoherent about Seto Kaiba and Kaiba Corp. and some scandal on the news. So far, none of what she was saying was making much sense and you failed to understand how any of it related to you.

It was still much too early for this; eventually you hung up on her and went to check the news on your phone to see if you could make sense of why she was in such a panic. The top 5 searches, at least, on every search engine were trending with the names of you and Kaiba. You opened an article to see the pictures of you two last night, both during and after your inauguration; a picture of you leaning on his arm during the ceremony, with him looking down at you, a picture of you two standing very close to each other with him holding your shoulders, him guiding you down the stairs with you looking up at him, him helping you into the car, there were so many more. They were conveniently timed and taken out of context but they looked very convincing, even to you. You buried your face in your hands in exasperation; this was going to be very difficult to talk your way out of. To make things worse, Kaiba was not regarded a gentleman by any capacity by the media and public, so this ‘chivalry’ towards a stranger felt, well strange and out of place. Without the presence of some sort of relationship, the media rationalized, it would be out of character for him. But you were a stranger. It had been the first time you had met. You knew you had such a bad feeling about this last night. You started suspecting whether indeed he had had ulterior motives in approaching you.

You scanned the article as you shot of out bed and started getting ready. The article said something along the lines of how you two had been very intimate throughout the night, with him not leaving your side and more exaggerated rubbish you didn’t care to read. You had gotten the gist of it. The paparazzi had gone to town with a story about two very popular, very high profile individuals and basically wrote novels. The titles were just as ridiculous.

You hurriedly did your hair and make-up and quickly buttoned up a short-sleeved white linen dress with baby blue stripes before sprinting out of your penthouse, first almost forgetting, then tripping over your pastel blue pumps.

You decided to drive yourself as it would be much faster than yelling at the driver from the back seat to speed. You raced down the road but didn’t make it too far before morning traffic brought you to a complete halt. You started cursing as you looked at the car dash to see it was quarter past eight, knowing you would be there for a while. As you moved at a snail’s pace, packed on all sides by the vehicles of other morning commuters, you looked around distracted, waiting impatiently for
the traffic to move so you could get on with your day.

You were absentmindedly staring at the large screen attached to the side of a building your eyes had wandered to, when the morning news switched to the next news story. As you read the words that flashed across the massive screen, you were incensed. Your emotions were a combination of outrage, shock and disbelief, reading the words you had just read over and over again as if they were an alien language. The words stayed the same, but each time you read them it made less sense than the last. Was this some kind of sick joke?

“Kaiba Corporation releases official statement confirming that dating rumours are true,” it read.
“That… maggot,” you screamed, failing to find a better insult. “What the hell is he thinking?”

You let out another muffled scream. You almost wanted to get out of the car and run to Kaiba Corp. demanding answers, but you knew you would just end up amassing a crowd of people chasing after you, especially with all this commotion.

Surely this was not true. At first, you started laughing hysterically, not knowing how to react. There must have been some kind of mistake in their public relations department. You weren’t surprised by Seto Kaiba making unilateral decisions, that much could be expected of him, but why on earth would he do something so nonsensical? If anything, he was hurting his title as one of the most eligible bachelors in Asia, though you were sure he didn’t care about some silly title like that. But in all seriousness, how did this benefit him? You continued laughing, you were still in denial. By the time you had recovered enough to order your PR team to figure out what was happening, they were already on it. If there was anything positive that would come out of this mess, it was that your board members would be ecstatic by this news.

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When you arrived at Kaiba Corp. the entrance was swarming with reporters. You looked around for another exit, spotting the underground parking entrance. You pulled up to the entrance, rolling down your tinted windows for the guard. He looked up from his phone, then back down at it again and then at you before he let you in without a word. He must have been watching the news.

Once you were inside, you flew up the stairs, not bothering to wait for the elevators, stalking up to the reception, demanding you be directed to Kaiba’s office. The woman at the reception calmly gets up and asks you if you have an appointment.

Are you serious? No I don’t have an appointment.

“Do you not watch the news? Or does your company not inform employees when it releases a public statement? I’M HIS GIRLFRIEND, I DON’T NEED AN APPOINTMENT!” Those last words were dripping with sarcasm, you were hysterical. You knew it wasn’t the poor lady’s fault for how your morning has been going but you couldn’t help it. “Show. Me. To. Mr. Kaiba’s. Office.” You said emphasizing each word. She just stared at you like a deer in headlights when the other receptionist quickly interjected, offering to guide you to the top floor to his office.

The latter receptionist guided you to the top floor and directed you to Kaiba’s office. You stormed past Kaiba’s assistant, who tried to stop you and barged right through the heavy wooden doors into the office. You were relieved to see that there was no one else besides Kaiba in the office when you intruded. He looked up at you from his papers from the far end of the room. You thought you had seen a mildly startled expression flash across his face but it disappeared before you could be certain. Your eyes met his blue ones and your mind went blank.

Now that you were finally in his office, you couldn’t think of what to say. You had spent all your energy fuming in denial, trying to get there, wanting answers, that you had not given any thought to how you were actually going to word the question.

You weren’t at all comfortable around the man, naturally, you hardly knew him. What little you did know came from your observations of him last night along with what you had read of him or heard in the media – and you knew better than anyone that that could hardly be a reliable source of
information. Sure, this wasn’t the first time you had been in his presence, but this was the first time you were facing him with a clear mind – clearer than your mind was yesterday. You were also here to confront him, and the mere idea was nerve wracking. So naturally, you felt apprehensive of him. Seto Kaiba was the most powerful man in Japan. A grade-schooler could tell you that.

What interest could the most powerful man in Japan have in you? The sudden realization that he potentially wanted something from you made this confrontation even more daunting. You could feel the hair on the back of your neck standing up.

You were a control freak, you’d be the first to admit that, but just being in his presence, you could feel your control over this situation slipping away.

He had a very intimidating aura to him and those blue eyes were piercing. His eyes were boring into you, expecting you to speak, but you noticed that his gaze didn’t seem menacing. He wasn’t glaring, just waiting for you to say something. You took deep breath, regaining your composure; you began walking forward to him.

Try not to pick a fight with him, you told yourself. This is not someone you want as your enemy.

“I hope you’re having a pleasant morning Mr. Kaiba, care to explain what the hell this is?” your tried to sound calm but exasperation was evident in your tone as you practically threw your phone on his desk with an open article with his statement on it.

Oh yeah, that won’t piss him off at all. No, no, he’s not going to react badly at all to that, you thought sarcastically.

“You said you needed a husband.” He simply stated in a matter-of-fact manner, much more calmly than you had expected. Your eye twitched. Come again? That didn’t quite answer your question so you waited for him to elaborate, but he didn’t. Was he expecting you to understand his entire rationalization behind his decision from five words?

“So you elected yourself for the position?” You asked him accusingly, thoroughly confused.

“In a sentence, yes.”

‘And in more than a sentence?’ you asked yourself.

“With who’s permission?” Well wasn’t that a dumb question; like Kaiba would ever consider waiting for permission. “It was not an offer Mr. Kaiba! Besides, I said I wanted a husband, not a boyfriend! Are you even interested in me? How is this beneficial to either of us?” You couldn’t stop yourself. You weren’t sure what had possessed you but your hysteria had taken over. You willed yourself to calm down but you couldn’t.

“Yes.” He cut you off abruptly.

“What?” Yes? Yes, what?

“I am interested in you.”

“And this is how you thought to express that interest? By announcing to the whole world we were dating, without my consent?” You were gobsmacked. Your mind didn’t know how you were supposed to react in a situation like this. Should you be flattered by his bizarre confession of sorts? Feel violated by his absolute lack of consideration for your feelings, input and privacy? Confused? You didn’t know. It was the feeling of being a machine that simply did not have the manual to produce an output for the information that was being entered. “You hardly know anything about
me, Mr. Kaiba.” You tried to suppress your anger, but each of his answers was worse than the last.

“On the contrary, I know everything I need to know about you.” He countered. This confident declaration made you feel a little small. It was as if he was implying that you were so simple that less than a few hours’ study was enough to fully comprehend you, or that only certain aspects of your character were worth knowing about. You weren’t sure what you considered worse. He gave it a thought for a moment. “You’re from a prestigious background, intelligent, accomplished, you’re called the ‘Nation’s Fairy,’ in other words well received by the public, well read, proficient in a wide range of subjects from what I observed last night, competent, and carry yourself gracefully enough to accompany me. Need I continue?” It was all materialistic or would act as a status symbol to him in some way, everything he had just listed. He was basically calling you a trophy. You didn’t like being handled this way. You couldn’t help but feel a little disappointed that he wasn’t attracted to you as a person, instead of as a symbol or object, not that you had any such expectations; after all, you had met him for the first time yesterday. That didn’t stop you from taking great offence at the implication of your value being reduced to a simple prize to be had. This was ridiculous, this whole situation is ridiculous. He couldn’t just make up his mind and buy people like objects.

You began to wonder how you had gotten into this mess. Something, somewhere along the lines had gone wrong but you didn’t know where. Where did things start going wrong? When you met him? When you had let him help you? Or now that you’re actually standing here entertaining his ludicrous reasoning?

“Did you pause to consider my opinion, Mr. Kaiba? Did it perhaps occur to you that my sentiments may differ from yours?”

“Given our professions, social standing, and positions in the public eye, I think a relationship of convenience will be mutually beneficial for the both of us. I see no possible reason for you to object”

Relationship of convenience. Only to keep up appearances. Ouch. You knew that was where this conversation was heading, but it still hurt hearing that these were his reasons for his interest.

You had helped yourself to a seat at this point. You had so much to challenge in what he had said but found yourself at a loss for words. He was addressing the issue like a business deal. No, he was addressing it exactly like one. A deal that has been finalized on his own terms.

He didn’t want you. Well, he wanted you, just not in the way you had, somewhere in the edge of your consciousness come to imagine. And that stung, though you weren’t sure why. Perhaps your pride was wounded.

He wanted a relationship with you, one void of emotional attachment. He was demanding it. No, he had basically taken the initiative to single-handedly establish it. You wondered if there was even any physical attraction involved in his decision. You doubted it.

“You’re suggesting – no, you want to pursue a relationship…because you feel…I would be an asset to you?” you cautiously worded the question, trying to select as carefully as possible the correct words to properly express your current outrage.

“Precisely. Conversely, I would imagine I would serve a similar role to you.” You were floored. He just plainly admitted to calling you a fancy accessory. You did not appreciate the thought of having your value being compared to the likes of a glorified handbag. Though then again, he had addressed himself in the same way.
You were still offended, and as much as you hated how blunt he was about it, you couldn’t help but agree with much of what he was saying. A relationship with Seto Kaiba wouldn’t spark public outrage. I mean it would, a favourite celebrity being taken off the market always offended certain people, but they would accept it. Purely based on wealth, status and profile, you were an ideal match. You were both, attractive, young, influential and rich. The age difference concerned you slightly but it was a minor detail. From a pragmatic perspective, it would be advantageous to you, both professionally and personally. The media would be weary publishing fabricated scandals about Seto Kaiba’s girlfriend. On top of it all, unlike a regular boyfriend where you would have to invest time – that you didn’t have – and emotion into the relationship, this would require none of it. There was a certain degree of freedom involved. Pragmatically, it was ideal. Though you wondered, was there even a point to such a static relationship?

Seto Kaiba was demanding, entitled and impulsive, but he was by no means stupid. Unbeknownst to you, he had considered his options intensively before arriving at this conclusion. His thought process was quite simple though; he had seen something that he wanted to have, deemed it suitable and worthy of him, so he was claiming it. He wanted to have you, and he always got what he wanted. It was black and white. He failed to see this ‘grey area’ you were addressing.

Your mind had already weighed the facts and figures, but you couldn’t bring yourself to agree. Not that he was expecting your agreement; he was merely waiting for you to accept the situation.

Your frantic thinking was interrupted by your assistant calling to remind you of an appointment you were due to be in later that morning.

“I’ll be right there.” You hung up on her as you returned your attention to Kaiba. This deal with the devil would have to wait.

“You look like you need some time to consider this.” ‘Right, because your earlier, very public announcement left much room for a revision based on my decision,’ you grumbled to yourself. ‘I have a prior engagement I must get going to, and by the looks of it, so do you. Let’s discuss this over dinner. I’ll come pick you up at six.”

You were starting to think that this man knew no other form of speech besides commands. You very reluctantly agreed to dinner, exchanging numbers before taking your leave.

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You had to literally sneak your way back in to your own company. The entrance was overrun by reporters having a fit.

“Release a statement coinciding with Kaiba.Corp’s, confirming the dating rumours.” Your secretary and PR director looked at you as if you had told them to grow a third eye. “What?” You asked with a raised eyebrow, they wouldn’t dare questions your intentions.

You had debated the pros and cons the entire way back, and all your contemplating with yourself had led to this conclusion. You had considered how it would appear if your side had denied the rumours when someone as highly regarded and reputable as Seto Kaiba was so plainly admitting it. It would confuse the public, make them curious as to where things had gone wrong in translation and then it would really become a scandal. You had also come to the conclusion that sooner or later, you would be pressured by your board’s directors to settle into some form of an arranged relationship. It would do a lot more damage to dismiss these rumours now and then later go through the same process with someone else, most likely someone not as… well someone not Seto Kaiba. Somehow, that option seemed worse, it almost felt disappointing. At least Kaiba was obscenely attractive. There wasn’t even a point in denying that.
‘Let’s see how long this takes for this to very publicly blow up in my face.’

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You had meant to head back home to change your outfit for your ‘date’ with Kaiba that evening but you had been in and out of meetings all morning, then gotten carried away with work and when the script reading for your upcoming drama had ended, it was already well past six. The skies were clouding and rain was starting to fall as you raced back to your company building to find Kaiba’s car waiting for you in the underground parking area. You notice he had driven himself.

“Do you not own a watch? You’re late.” He looked infuriated. Seventeen minutes late to be exact. You winced at his tone slightly. You had expected him to have stormed out within the first few minutes of you not showing up.

‘It’s the twenty-first century, we all own smart phones.’ You bit back that response.

“You scheduled this at the last minute. I had prior engagements which happened to take longer and many more I had to cancel to make time for this.” You unapologetically stood your ground, you weren’t lying.

“Don’t do it again.” He commanded.

“Unfortunately Mr. Kaiba, not making promises I cannot keep is a personal motto I live by. I would imagine it’ll be impossible for you to honour every engagement we make in the future, so I hardly think it’s fair to berate me for being a few minutes late.”

He almost said something but following what looked like a lot of thought, and even more self-restraint, he elected to say nothing.

You both remained silent during your ride. You were uneasy. You were beginning to question why you were here. You should have asked for more time to think, you shouldn’t have jumped to release that statement. The whole ‘how and when did this mess officially start’ and ‘when did it become too late to get out’ spiel started up in your head.

You hadn’t asked him where your destination was, he hadn’t bothered to tell. There was a strange sensation of constriction in your chest and had a knot building up in your stomach as you continuously re-considered your decision. His temper was concerning you, though he seemed to have calmed down a lot faster than you had expected. You still weren’t entirely aware of his intentions or how he regarded you as a person, if he did at all. Your own decision had been purely based on material convenience – at least that’s what you had been telling yourself. You still weren’t aware of his intentions or how he regarded you as a person, if he did at all. Your own decision had been purely based on material convenience – at least that’s what you had been telling yourself. You had been sure his was too. You had said ‘yes’ to his reputation rather than him as a person. You were beginning to regret it. Your intentions behind your decision didn’t sit right with you. You began to wonder if in your decision, with your limited knowledge of the man, if and how you regarded him as a person. If then, were your intentions any more morally acceptable than his?

You were pulled away from your thoughts when you noticed the car nearing a large black wrought iron gate, guarding a large English-styled mansion with white painted walls and large windows.

“Where are we?” you inquired, you had been expecting a fine dining restaurant of some sort.

“My mansion. I read from an interview that you disliked meeting in public places.” You didn’t know if you should have felt flattered in that moment for him having paid attention to your preferences or slightly uncomfortable that he had researched you in some form. Then again, from what he had mentioned about you that morning, you were sure Kaiba had to have researched you extensively to have known as much as he did. Hell, you were sure he had probably even done a
background check on you too.

In a testament to how fast your thoughts branched off into tangents, your mind suddenly painted the image of Kaiba reading a Vogue magazine article to find that information and it slightly amused you. Laughing internally, you reminded yourself that in reality, an assistant probably procured that information on his behalf. It still helped to lighten your sombre mood slightly.

The rain had worsened so much that by the time the car fought its way past the wall of reporters that it sounded more like hail against the roof of the car than water droplets. You wondered if it would slow down in time for you to get home.

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You have never felt you were underdressed. However, sitting in the Kaiba manor’s grand dining room, decorated in eighteenth century French style, under ornate crystal chandeliers in a white linen dress better suited for the shores of Zakynthos or a weekend in Sicily, you felt severely underdressed for the first time in your life. Between the lacking outfit and the obvious scrutiny of Kaiba’s gaze, you shifted uncomfortably in your seat, taking a sip of your red wine.

Waiting to be served, you two were alone. There was so much tension in the air you could practically reach out and grip it. There was no intimacy in the atmosphere. It felt as if you were sitting in a stuffy boardroom with a business partner you were barely acquainted with. You didn’t know what to say, or rather how to address what you had wanted to say, so each time you felt your nerves taking over, you resorted to drowning it out with wine. Was this what they called a blind date? Did you want him to like you? Was it your expectations that felt burdensome, or was it just his unnerving stare.

Your back was straight against the chair Kaiba had pulled out for you, your hands on your lap, you scolded yourself to hold your head up but you couldn’t cast your gaze up from the napkin on your lap in the fear that you might somehow accidentally lock eyes with Kaiba, who was sitting at the head of the table to your left.

“You look uncomfortable.” He observed after you had been served the main course. You knew laughing sarcastically wouldn’t be appropriate in this situation but it was the only reaction that came to mind at his pointing out the obvious.

“I assure you Mr. Kaiba, I’m quite comfortable.” You put such little effort in trying to make your bluff convincing that you wondered why you had even bothered lying so plainly. It had almost come off as sarcasm.

He saw right through it. You could tell, but he chose to stay silent. You were contemplating what an appropriate topic would be to bring up to break the silence when, the wind howling outside, broke violently against the window, startling you away from your thoughts. You may have slightly jumped in your seat as you spun around out of instinct. As the wind and rain continued and worsened outside, the continued silence inside was becoming unbearable. You willed yourself to say something, anything.

“I imagine the news this morning surprised you a great deal.” Kaiba beat you to it.

“Yes, quite.”

You hit a dead end again. A few more moments passed before you posed your next question.
“Do you enjoying listening to music, Mr. Kaiba?” you asked unsurely, trying to diffuse the tension.


“Well I work with idols quite a bit, so I suppose I enjoy pop music.” He didn’t seem very impressed with that answer, not that you minded. “Though I do like classical music as well.”

“Do you have a favourite piece?”

“If I have to choose, it would probably have to be Vivaldi’s Spring.” You declared excitedly. “A bit of an obvious choice, I know, followed closely by Waltz of the Flowers.” He observed you quietly, reminding you of how nervous you had previously been. “Do you happen to have a favourite?” You wanted to direct the attention back to him.

“Not particularly.”

“I see.”

The tension had dissipated and settled into awkwardness. You drank more wine to numb yourself from your hyper-awareness towards it, trying to divert your attention to the pouring rain outside.

Eventually the conversation turned to his work, what his company was developing and a brief conversation about the stock market. He looked to be more in his element as he spoke for the majority of the conversation. You didn’t have the background to quite grasp the concept of the technologies he was discussing, so you found yourself paying more attention to how eloquent his speech was, how his facial muscles and jawline moved when he spoke and the sound of his voice. He was stoic but charming, definitely a sight for sore eyes.

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As dessert was served, you looked down at your chocolate panna cotta; you were distracted as you wondered how many calories were in it. How many calories had been in those four – or was it five – glasses of red wine you had consumed over dinner? You were slightly mortified, would you fit into your elaborate kimono for the period drama you were going to start shooting next week? Your thoughts were interrupted by the sound of glass clinking. It came from above you. You looked up to see the crystals in the chandeliers above ever so slightly vibrating. The ceiling also seemed to tremor, but you seemed to have been the only one to notice, at least the only one concerning yourself by paying any attention to it. Was the wind outside that bad?

“I had originally intended to propose to you.” Kaiba stated very abruptly, once the maids were out of earshot and you two were alone again.

You were still quite pre-occupied observing the ever-so-slightly trembling crystals above you to be totally invested in what he had said, so you absentmindedly replied, inadvertently cutting him off.

“A sudden proposal for marriage, immediately after I had acquired the corporation that was your immediate competitor, would have raised suspicion of collusion or conspiring to monopolize.” You said plainly.

“Exactly,” he continued, as you slowly started repeating what had been said and began properly processing it. “An arranged marriage, given the circumstances would have inspired a fair amount of disapproval and suspicion, but going through the motions of an actual relationship will portray a
certain degree of sincerity and stand to justify it in the public’s eye. People buy into love stories.” You weren’t entirely sure which direction this was heading. His explanation felt cold and extremely calculated.

“Mr. Kaiba, where is—”

“My intentions towards you haven’t changed.” His voice was low but sincere. He was looking at you directly, his jaw clenched, eyes piercing into yours. Your brain had finally caught up.

“Ar-are you proposing to me…” you stuttered, knitting your brows, tearing your eyes away from the chandeliers, “for marriage!?” You hadn’t been ready for that; you turned your face away from him, staring forward, eyes that of a deer in headlights. “You…want to be married to me?” you reiterated after a long pause, surely you misheard.

“Yes,” he simply replied, as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. You heard the sound of silverware clinking against something as it dropped on the table, you were fairly certain it was yours.

Well this was certainly un-romantic.

You registered the words but they were yet to be entirely absorbed, when the man who was introduced earlier in the evening to be the manor’s butler interrupted the two of you. Kaiba was visibly displeased at his ill-timed intrusion.

“Pardon the interruption, Master Kaiba, but I have just been informed that Young Master Kaiba will not be flying in from Tokyo tonight as all flights to and from Domino have been cancelled due to the severe Typhoon that’s affecting the city. Residents of Domino have been asked to stay indoors and take extreme caution.” The butler advised.

As Kaiba aggressively dismissed him, in the midst of your muddled thoughts, you vaguely remembered that Kaiba had a younger brother, then your thoughts distantly registered that a Typhoon was sweeping the city, but then they immediately returned to desperately trying to process the situation. You sat very still for you weren’t sure how long.

You couldn’t answer him because you didn’t know what you wanted.

The most powerful man in Japan was wanting to marry you, and in that moment, suddenly you started asking yourself what you expected in a relationship, and more importantly what he expected. You could physically feel a side of your head going numb, the sensation of pins and needles against your skull. You weren’t the doe-eyed goddess with flawless hair that the media made you out to be, you weren’t the same girl you were on the glossy Vogue covers, that girl who always ranked within the Top five of the Most Beautiful Women in The World in reality; you just couldn’t be her all the time. You didn’t always look like that; your ‘perfect’ skin had old scars and stretch marks. You were still young so you still got acne occasionally. Your figure that all those teenage girls and young women coveted didn’t look like that all the time. Sometimes it bloated and you couldn’t fit in your jeans. You weren’t ashamed of yourself but you grew afraid. You were afraid of disappointing Seto Kaiba, of not living up to his expectations you knew he had of you. Had you grown fond of this man? You feared your insecurities being found out. You feared being scorned by a man of his stature. You didn’t want to be rejected. It’s what’s on the inside that counts, you told yourself, but it was what was on the inside escaping that gripped you with fear. You still had nightmares from your childhood; you were mortified of the dark. If he knew, he would surely laugh at you for being a child.

Then strangely, you feared that he would never get close enough to you to discover these things. If
tonight was any preview of what being married to him would be like, you feared you would never be intimate with him. It would be an arranged marriage, one of convenience; you would be just another business partner to him. You couldn’t afford to have such expectations of him.

You had no immediate family, no friends. The only people you interacted with were those who you worked with. You were alone; you had been alone a very long time and you had eventually grown comfortable with it, but in that moment you realized that you didn’t always want to be. You feared this man would force you to live that way for the rest of your life.

Suddenly, something inside you cracked. It cracked and it bled all over, filling you, and suffocating you.

You shot up from your chair, knocking it over with the momentum. You stuttered out an apology to Kaiba and ran out the front doors. You felt embarrassed for your behaviour, your better judgement told you that you were overreacting but your body was on auto-pilot. The alcohol was definitely playing a large factor, but you nerves had gotten the better of you.

It was strange, you didn’t want to say ‘no,’ you were sure of that, but ‘yes’ didn’t see like the opposite to ‘no’ in that moment. You didn’t suppose, ‘maybe’ I’ll marry you, Mr. Kaiba seemed like an appropriate alternative.’

You weren’t sure what had sparked such an aggressive reaction. Perhaps marriage felt too permanent. You weren’t prepared to share that much of yourself with him, but more so you feared never being able to share any of yourself at all.

The rain was coming down in grey sheets, the wind knocking you backwards as the doors closed behind you. A few more steps forward, you didn’t know when, but you had stumbled out of one of your heels. The sheer weight of the rain forced you to bend forward. You could barely see straight and the visibility was no more than a few feet. The wind and rain kept breaking mercilessly against the mansion walls as old trees continued twisting under the force.

You felt someone grabbing your shoulders and spinning you around to face them, holding you up. You fought to keep your eyes open against the heavy raindrops pelting your face like needles. Your eyes were drawn immediately to the brilliant sapphire eyes glaring down at you through his drenched hair sticking to his porcelain face. He held your shoulders firmly with both hands, while clutching your light blue shoe in his right.

“I have to go! There are reporters at the gate, they know I’m here, I need to go before it’s dark.” You tried to explain but it came out in a jumbled mess. You registered his mouth move but no sound came. He said a few more words but you just continued shaking your head as you couldn’t hear him through your sobbing and rain.

“You’re not thinking straight!” he finally bellowed through the sound of the raging typhoon, lightly shaking you. As if that wasn’t enough to shock to back to your senses, before the words had barely left his mouth, a main branch from an old oak finally snapped from the trunk and slammed down mere feet away from you two, the smaller branches missing you two, and the living room windows a few yards away from you, by mere inches. Kaiba instinctively shielded you. “We need to get inside before your idiocy gets us both killed.” he all but roared. You stood there, too shocked to retort.

He grabbed you by the wrist and turned to leave, but as he walked you couldn’t keep up with his pace. For one, he was much taller than you – nine inches to be exact – and second you were limping on one heel. He seems to have noticed this as he abruptly turned to face you and suddenly crouched to the ground, grabbing your ankle and roughly shoving your barefoot into your heel he
had been holding. He then swiftly stood back up and continued dragging you by the wrist to the mansion.

“I can’t take you back home tonight.” He finally said as the grand doors closed behind you.
“I can’t take you back home tonight.” He finally said as the grand doors closed behind you. He had his back turned to you so you couldn’t see the expression on his face. His entire body was drenched as he stood in front of you in the foyer. You could tell by the way he stood that his muscles were tense. He seemed reluctant to speak, as he ran a hand through his wet hair. He felt distant as he spoke his next words, still facing away from you. “It’s too dangerous to drive in this weather. I understand that you would rather not be here with me right now, but you’ll just have to deal with it.”

You knew very well that no words could be loud enough to undo your actions just now. You knew how your sudden exit must have appeared. You were sure that his sudden coldness was because he was disillusioned by you. You didn’t stop to consider that he might have possibly felt rejected by your actions. Your mind was functioning quick enough to process all this information, but your body was frozen in shock. Your thoughts darted back every now and then to remember how close that branch had been to crushing the two of you.

You stood there, becoming painfully aware of the cold seeping through the drenched fabric of your dress, waiting for Kaiba to act. You momentarily considered taking your chances with Mother Nature’s wrath outside instead of sticking around to discover how terrifying Kaiba could potentially be. You knew from his countenance as he turned to face you that his thoughts were building up to explode. Your pride wouldn’t allow you to thank him for protecting you or to apologize. You were being childish but you couldn’t find it in yourself to act otherwise.

“What the hell was that just now? Are you some petulant child? Do you realize that one more step and you wouldn’t be standing here right now?” His words were harsh but there was an undertone of worry in his voice. It was so subtle that you wondered if you were feeding meaning into it. You had missed him staring down at your chest.

He ran his fingers through his hair again, forcing his hair to stick back, but some stubborn strands fell over his face again. He forced his eyes shut, throwing his head back as he let out a frustrated sigh, attempting to control his anger and regain his composure. Raindrops found their way down his face and neck, pooling at his collar bones.

He took off his coat, wordlessly draping it around your shoulders. The soaked fabric felt cold and heavy against your tired shoulders. You were slightly puzzled until he pulled on the collars, covering your chest. You looked down and noticed that the white fabric of your dress was soaked through and faintly revealed your skin and the outlines of your black lace bra. You felt the colour returning to your face. You realized what he had been looking down at and why he had abruptly stopped his yelling.

Through his white dress shirt, you noticed how the sodden fabric clung to his skin, revealing his well-toned torso in places.

“Do you plan to stand there all night and catch pneumonia?” His comment dripping with sarcasm and irritation pulled you from your internal gawking. You realized that he hadn’t expected a response when he roughly pulled you into the mansion by the wrist.
He led you up many flights of stairs and winding hallways before throwing open one of the many white doors that lined the blue carpeted hallway. The door revealed what appeared to be a spacious guest bedroom, decorated mainly in white with accents of silver and light blue. Lamps and a small chandelier emitting golden light illuminated the grand room.

“I’ll have a maid bring you something to change into.” It seemed he was quite intent on not making eye contact with you. He released your wrist in a manner you could only describe as disgustedly throwing it away from him. You silently nodded. “Goodnight.” His tone was icy.

As you turned to enter the room, the lights flickered slightly. Your eyes shot up to observe the lamps that hung from the hallway. As your eyes landed on the light, it disappeared. It took you a moment to process the situation as you stood surrounded by darkness. Your reflexes kicked in as you blindly reached out in the direction you had heard the dull sound of Kaiba’s footsteps stop. After a few steps, you made contact with what you assumed was his arm. Your hands cautiously climbed up his forearm, pulling yourself closer to his body. You drew in a shaky breath. You could feel your body trembling slightly in panic, further intensified by the shivering.

“I’m here.” His tone changing completely from how he had bid you goodnight moments earlier – it almost sounded reassuring, as if he had somehow understood your fear. It was the first you had heard him use that tone. You nodded even though you knew he could not see. You tightened your grip on his arm.

You heard the hum of the back-up generators in the next few seconds and within the next couple minutes, the lights were back on. Your eyes travelled upwards and immediately met the blue ones peering down at you, a hint of confusion in them. You awkwardly released your hold on his arm and stumbled a couple of steps backwards.

“Thank you, Mr. Kaiba. Goodnight.” You muttered quickly, all but slamming the door behind you. If you hadn’t wanted to be alone before, you definitely did now. As relieved as you were that Kaiba was around when the blackout happened, you were quite embarrassed at having revealed how mortified you were of the dark to him.

You had just changed out of your wet clothes; save for your underwear, into a bathrobe that was in the guest suite’s bathroom, when a maid appeared at your door with a pile of folded garments. She took away your dress and bra to have dried, leaving you with the garments she had carried in on the foot of your bed. You picked the first piece up to see a casual, white, button up shirt with stylistically distressed accents around the collar. It was long enough to reach halfway down your thighs and serve as a dress. Then the realization that this was Kaiba’s shirt hit you, making your face flush a deep vermillion.

You supposed that as no female lived in the manor, there would be no reason for there to be anything besides his clothes for you to change into. You picked up the other garment folded on your bed to discover a pair of his black pants. You assessed the draw string waist and concluded that there was no way for you to secure those pants on your small waist. It also didn’t help that the pant legs were a good three miles longer than your own legs. You folded those back and put them away, resorting to just slip the white shirt on.

You dried your hair with the hairdryer that was plugged into the bathroom’s vanity and decided to call it a night. As you walked across the ivory marble floor, up to the floor length curtains to draw them closed, you took a glimpse of the typhoon continuing to ravage the mansion’s garden, along with everything beyond it. You were too distracted by the rainstorm when a branch from a nearby tree was forcefully slammed against the window by the wind, giving you the impression of a dark claw reaching out for you, knocking you backwards in surprise. You scrambled to pick yourself off the ground, slightly falling forward as you hurriedly drew the curtains, allowing only the howling of the wind to penetrate the mansion’s walls.
The noise from the storm outside was so unnerving that you chose to sleep with all the lights on.

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You were surrounded by darkness. Your legs felt limp as you forced yourself to stand on the old wooden floor, creaking under your weight as you hesitantly took steps forward, feeling your way around the dark. You couldn’t tell if your eyes were open. You felt your hand wrapping around a door handle, desperately twisting it in an attempt to escape the dark. It wouldn’t open. The darkness was consuming you.

On the other side of the door, down the corridor of this traditional Japanese inspired villa, you hear the sound of metal keys hitting against each other, and the echo of sharp heels hitting hardwood approaching you. You instinctively start crying, knees hitting the ground with a dull thud. The vivid sensation of stinging pain across your limbs resurfaced in your memory. Your heard yourself begging, rubbing your palms together in circular motions, swaying back and forth, but the voice that came was much younger than your own. Your felt your parched throat burning as if it was tearing, reminding you that you’ve been deprived of water for many days, and food for perhaps even longer. Your body ached in response to the approaching footsteps, knowing fully what would become of you. You begged to let you be, promising that you won’t make any noise, that you’ll live as if you didn’t exist. This time, as every other time, you didn’t know what you had done wrong, and yet a hushed voice reminded you of what you had done wrong. ‘You were still alive,’ it repeated over and over.

Your breathing intensified as you tried to suppress your sobbing. You tried reminding yourself that this room had a window unlike the one in the basement you were locked up in before, so it was only completely dark at night. You tried to hold yourself together till dawn, feeling your weak body collapsing on to the floor. You heard the screech of the heavy door swinging open in the darkness.

“Wake up!”

In your fragmented memory, you remembered promising yourself that you would never allow yourself to feel this vulnerable again. You felt your heart palpitating, threatening to beat out of your chest as the figure at the door slowly advanced towards you.

“Wake up!” The distant, disconnected voice repeated. Your felt your body being lightly shaken by an invisible force.

Your eyes snapped opened to a dark room with blue eyes illuminated by a small stream of silver light. He was leaning over you with his arms holding your shoulders in place. You felt yourself drenched in a cold sweat, trickling down from your forehead, collarbones and neck, pooling in your back and chest, soaking your shirt. You could feel strands of your hair sticking to your flushed face. In a distant corner of your mind, you registered that the light came from a phone situated next to the side of your head.

You could still hear the metal keys clinking in the distance, you continued sobbing uncontrollably, and your breathing was increasingly rapid. You attempted to sit up, but you were being held down. You twisted your elbows up from where they were lying on your sides to hold onto your captor’s forearms, nails digging into his skin.

“She’s coming,” you kept repeating disjointedly, “do you not hear the keys, she’s coming.” You
were crying hysterically, your words incoherent as you breathed through your mouth. You didn’t feel like air was reaching your lungs. “She-she has the cane – ” you gasped. You then stopped addressing the man above you, “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry, please…”

“No one’s coming! Snap out of it! You’re awake!” the man roughly commanded in an angry tone. You continued your sobbing, unable to stop. “Get a hold of yourself! You’re safe!” He spoke the last phrase with a gentler tone. How could you be safe? What did he mean by you were awake, you asked yourself.

Tears kept streaming down your face, combining with the sweat, as your conscious mind slowly began pulling yourself out of your nightmare, detaching and releasing yourself from the events that occurred almost a decade ago. You tried to steady your breathing.

“The storm damaged some of the back-up generators,” Kaiba spoke slowly, still holding you down. “The security is still up but we lost the power generators.” He slowly loosened his grip on your shoulders as you made to sit up. As you pulled yourself up to a sitting position, you were only able to see around the small dome like sphere of light being created by the flashlight on Kaiba’s phone surrounding you two. You felt the shirt cling to your body, especially where the sweat had gathered around your chest. You didn’t realize that all your struggling had unbuttoned a few of the top buttons, leading to what most would call ‘indecent exposure’ of a greater part of your breasts.

The low hum of the storm could be heard outside. Mortified by the surrounding darkness, still in your shaken state, you tried to wrap your mind around Kaiba’s words. The storm had taken out the back-up generators, causing a blackout. You couldn’t even try to conceal how horrified you were even while remaining silent.

Before you could process much of anything else, an ear –splitting crashing noise against the window, followed by the sound of crushed glass falling, startled you out of your thoughts, drawing your attention to the window behind the drawn curtain. The howling of the wind became more audible.

Kaiba immediately made to go see what it was, but your reflexes kicked in, grabbing on to the edge of his sleeves, your eyes the size of saucers, pleading him to not go. He sighed frustrated as if at a child, and pried your fingers off of him. He disappeared for a moment into the dark, only to return moments later.

“The wind forced a branch into the window, shattering the glass.” He informed, picking up his phone with one hand and grabbing your wrist with the other, pulling you out of bed. “It’s not safe here. All the guest rooms are on the East wing, lined with trees.”

He pulled you out of your room, down the dark hallway, in your haste, forgetting to slip on your indoor slippers. He made a sharp turn into a room, the warmth of the matte carpet from the hallway being replaced with an icy coldness against the soles of your bare feet.

“Where are we?” you managed.

“My bedroom, it’s on the West wing, so it’s better shielded from the storm.”

“You-your bedroom?” you tried to resist him tugging you forward, further into the room.

“Yes,” he replied rather irritated. “Would you rather be alone, what with your fear of the dark?”

You didn’t understand why, but strangely you felt safe in the company of this man. You couldn’t quite comprehend it yourself; you had barely known him for twenty-four hours. Was it perhaps because he came looking for you when the power went down? Why had he come?
You didn’t reply as he continued rather roughly guiding you forward. He led you to sit on the bed. You immediately shot back up, standing.

“You want me to sleep here, with you?” You asked, hearing him growling in annoyance in response.

“What? Are you going to suggest sleeping on the freezing marble floor? Don’t be ridiculous.” He snapped. You realized he was still upset at you from earlier that evening.

He placed his phone with the flashlight on the nightstand next to you, illuminating a small area around you and walked around the bed to the other side. You slowly sat yourself down, feeling the mattress shift under his weight as he lay down on the far end of the mattress.

After much thought, coming to the conclusion that asking him if there was a sofa in the room would enrage him, you also laid down, slowly pulling the covers over your body. There was no way Kaiba would do anything to you.

A long stretch of silence, only disrupted by the continued wailing of the storm continued. You weren’t sure, but hours could have possibly passed. You lay there silently, eyes blankly staring up at the ceiling.

“Is the thought of being married to me that repulsive to you?” He finally asked, resentment evident in his tone. You couldn’t bring yourself to directly answer that question.

“Inadvertently, I’ve revealed to you many facets of myself that I’m less that proud of.” You spoke cautiously. “I want to apologize. I’m sure my earlier display has certainly left a poor impression on you of my character. I promise you, Mr. Kaiba, it was my own inhibitions that sparked my earlier, rather violent reaction and should not in the least bit be received as being my dislike towards you.”

“Everyone has a past.” He simply stated after a very long silence, presumably referring to the state he found you in when the generators died. “And if I thought poorly of you, you wouldn’t still be here, in my bed, no less.” His words, how seriously he had said them, made your face heat up.

Another long moment of silence passed.

“My offer to you is still open.”

“I don’t want to live my entire life as second best.” You had absentmindedly blurted out your thoughts. For the sake of your corporation and your image, and for many other pragmatic reasons, marrying Seto Kaiba was the ideal, but you could write a rational on why emotionally you were reluctant to say ‘yes,’ though perhaps this was your biggest fear of all.

“What?”

You didn’t know when it had begun, or if it had progressed far enough for self-loathing to the correct term, but you could never bring yourself to love, or even like the idea of yourself. You wouldn’t call it low self-esteem and you never considered yourself to be any lesser than the man next to you, but perhaps as a result of being in the public eye, in such a judgemental industry since your early teenage years, you were always picking yourself apart. You were such a perfectionist to the point you mentally dissected every part of yourself and attacked it for not living up to the standards you had imposed on yourself – your excuse was that it was how you stayed at the top of your profession. Ultimately, you were loved by a nation, but not really by any individual person in particular, yourself included. It was a rather empty feeling and you certainly didn’t want to live that
way in your marriage.

You heard him calling your name when you didn’t reply.

“What happens when you fall in love, with someone else?” you paused to consider if that question made much sense, then choosing to rephrase it, “I don’t want to live in the shadow of your mistress, someday.”

Your father had a mistress. She ended up becoming your step-mother. You couldn’t risk the possibility.

“Impossible.” He dismissed.

“What’s impossible? Why is it impossible?” you pressed, angered by his disregard of your very genuine fear.

“You honestly think I would be unfaithful to you? That’s what this is about?” You felt his weight shifting on the mattress. It felt like he was sitting himself up.

“You are proposing a marriage of convenience!” you shot back. “To the world, I would be your wife, but behind closed doors, I’ll be no more than your glorified business partner. Would I have the right to object your personal relations in this arrangement? You’re a man, you must have needs! You’ll eventually look elsewhere to fulfill them!” You were still lying down, but you had raised your voice without realizing.

“I do have needs.” He spoke in a dangerous voice, suddenly hovering above you, arms caging you. In his straddling position, he slowly lowered himself, his face was near the crook of your neck as he whispered in your ears, “And I have you for those.” He had moved so quickly that you had no time to react. One of his hands had found its way under the sheets, ripping them away from you, as he reached under his shirt you were wearing, his long fingers sending shivers down your body as they grazed your skin. His hand traced the contours of your body as it travelled upwards. This hadn’t been his original intention when he brought you in here, but you had pushed him too far.

“Marry me.” He demanded, as his fingers brushed over your breasts. He crushed his lips on to the side of your neck, aggressively kissing and biting down the side of your neck and along your collarbone. You knew there would be marks in those spots by tomorrow morning.

Your better judgement urged you to stop him, but the mere scent of him was intoxicating. You instinctively arched your back in response of the pleasure, unintentionally moaning, “Yes.” It was not your answer to his earlier demand, but he seems to have taken it as such.

He pulled away from you abruptly; a satisfied smirk was visible on his face in the silver light. “That’s what I was waiting to hear,” he stated, his breathing choppy.

“Wait, that’s not what I meant!” You protested, your eyes wide, quickly anchoring your hands onto his chest, attempting to maintain the space between you two. His hand was still slithering inside your shirt, groping you.

He effortlessly lowered himself over you again, folding your hands that were now gripping his own shirt under his weight in the process. “Tell me you don’t want me this way.” He tauntingly whispered in a cocky tone. He didn’t give you time to respond though, grazing his lips along your neck, biting a spot he had learned you were sensitive to, and quickly pulling away. He pinned your arms on either side of your head, “I need you in ways that go much beyond the confines of a typical business agreement,” he spoke huskily, looking you directly in the eye, as he guided one of your hands to his the large bulge in his pants. He grunted as he forced you to wrap your fingers around
it, applying pressure on it. You tried pulling your hand away to no avail.

Your chest began to rise and fall rapidly, heartbeat accelerating. He released your arms, suddenly reaching for the buttons of your shirt, tearing the front open, revealing your breasts. He acted faster than you could react, immediately pinning your arms back down again. Your bare breasts now exposed to Seto Kaiba, you were mortified. He insisted on keeping his gaze locked on to yours. You couldn’t find your voice as you tried struggling against his iron grip, eyes pleading to release you. Between your rapid breathing and violent struggling, you realized you were causing your breasts to freely bounce with you, putting on a show for Kaiba.

“Don’t look,” you managed weakly, looking away. He pulled your arms above your head, holding it with one hand.

“Why would I need to look elsewhere for pleasure when you look like this?” He declared lustfully, inspecting your body, pulling down your underwear by its string enough to reveal what it was meant to conceal. You held your breath, back arched, the contours of your ribs faintly visible under your naked form. “I was trying my best to control myself around you. Don’t tempt me, because I will not hesitate, having my way with you over and over right now.” He threatened as he ran his fingers over the lips between your legs. Forgetting what you had done just moments earlier, you started writhing your body to free yourself from under him. Your movement caused his fingers to further wedge themselves deeper between you, arousing you more. You moaned in response at this new feeling.

“Don’t look at me like that. Don’t touch me like that” You begged, looking away, your heart racing. You heard him chuckle darkly, as he brought his fingers up to his lips. You said this, but you secretly found yourself wanting him to look, wanting him to touch.

Seto Kaiba, after all was obscenely attractive, and as much as you resisted, you found yourself surrendering to his desires.

‘If you want romance, read a book,’ you told yourself. ‘This man could give you so much more.’

Chapter End Notes

Just a little note in case anyone was confused, the little nightmare except was the reader recollecting memories of her childhood abuse.

Also, I just want to reiterate and clarify that the only objections the reader had towards the marriage are all emotional. From the perspective of a businesswoman, she is subconsciously pushing herself towards it quite strongly because it is obviously the sensible and advantageous options for the sake of her corporation. She also has the tendency to prioritize her work in front of her personal feelings so...

And finally, to anyone surprised by Kaiba jumping the gun, just keep in mind that while he met the reader and we have only begun to see their interactions recently, that he was attracted to her for much longer.

Anyway, let me know what you think!
Chapter Notes

Over 5000 words... again, woo!

So quite a lot happens in this chapter. A little bit in the middle may seem like a filler but it does contribute to the main plot line down the chapter.

Yes, the title was inspired by the BTS song. I think it's quite fitting to how the reader feels through the Chapter.

Enjoy! ...?

Your eyes were staring up at the white ceiling; you didn’t know how long you had been that way. When your consciousness came to, you had found yourself already staring up. The room was softly lit, grey-gold daylight creeping in through the drawn curtains, filling the room in a hazy, dim light. You heard the rhythmic humming of the wind and rain outside.

You briefly diverted your eyes to the dust particles floating in the faint streams of light, wondering where you were.

The first thought that occurred to you was that you had to be in Seoul within the next few hours for a contract finalization.

You felt a pressure over your diaphragm and looked down to see a clothed arm draped over your entirely exposed chest area, while white sheets fell over your waist, covering everything below it. For a moment a sense of dread and panic began twisting in your gut, and then memories of last night’s exploits washed over you like a tidal wave, leaving you absolutely mortified.

Cautiously, you turned your head as slowly as you possibly could to face the man that lay next to you, as if prolonging the inevitable would somehow change who was next to you. Not that changing who he was would change anything; waking up next to any other strange man would still be just as horrifying, if not more. You were really just hoping for him to disappear.

You momentarily paused to ask yourself how you had felt about last night’s rather depraved affair, and the answer left you feeling even more scandalized. How had you actually found pleasure in what he did to you, he had violated you in every way. You looked at the man sleeping next to you, facing you, tousled brown hair falling over skin so flawless it could be porcelain. His expression was peaceful, muscles relaxed; a stark contrast from the usual scowl which adorned his face. As you watched him, you felt your anger rising, but you couldn’t find it in you to direct it at him, rather, you found yourself increasingly infuriated at yourself for not having tried harder to prevent it. Then strangely, the possibility of it never happening left you feeling a little disappointed, leading you to feel even more sickened. It was a vicious cycle. You still wanted him in every sinful way you could possibly think of but also wanted your morals to be intact. You resorted to finding comfort in it only having progressed as far as it did.

Then, another disjointed memory found its way into your stream of conscious thought, and you
quite literally, felt your heart stop, it was painful, a sense of paralysis overtook your body, and you felt a wave of pins and needle-esque shivers sweeping through your skull and down your body. You remembered that in the midst of his forceful, sexual persuasion, you had agreed to marrying him, and with Seto Kaiba, mere words were binding.

You were never going to escape this man. Your mind went blank.

Another moment passed, and you focused your attention back towards the ceiling. Suddenly, a truly heart wrenching thought occurred to you. ‘A man could lust for more than one woman,’ a voice reminded you. You didn’t really know why, but that realization devastated you. You felt as if last night’s affair had failed to prove anything about Kaiba’s loyalty and all you had allowed was for him to defile you with no true purpose. You had given your body to a man who you had known for barely twenty-four hours. Tears stung your eyes and perhaps the most disappointing thing was that it had failed to prove if he could truly be yours, and a signature on a piece of paper could hardly change that.

You felt like a possession, pressed naked against his fully clothed form, his arm draped possessively over you. You needed to leave. The first thought that passed through your mind was that you couldn’t allow him to see you without makeup. Sure, he had seen you last night, but it had been fairly dark. It was not that you felt embarrassed by showing your bare face; makeup felt more like a final barrier. It was symbolic. He had seen everything last night and you felt vulnerable. You needed to put on a mask, something to hide, something to keep away from Seto Kaiba. Would it have to be like this for the rest of your life?

You slowly pried yourself out of his grip, reaching for the phone on the nightstand on your side to see the time. You realized that it wasn’t your phone and that it was completely dead, probably from having the flashlight on all night. You pulled yourself up to sit on the edge of the bed, legs dangling over the edge, and pulled the unbuttoned, white shirt that had slipped off your shoulders and into the crook of your elbows, back up and button it. You needed to retrieve your phone and other belongings from your room.

When you cracked open the bedroom door to the hallway, you immediately noticed that the power was back on. As you opened the door to step outside, you made eye contact with a maid coming up the landing and you both froze, each for your own reasons, her out of terror at being in your presence and you, mortified for having been seen half dressed, coming out of the young CEO’s bedroom this early in the morning. You weren’t stupid; you knew she had gotten the picture, probably a more exaggerated picture. Her eyes slowly drifted down to an area below your face, past you, probably catching sight of Kaiba’s sleeping form, and then back to the area on you she was staring at before. You resorted to concealing your completely destroyed composure by cloaking it in menace. She tried to cower away before you pulled her back by the arm and asked her to direct you to the room you had been in last night. She wasn’t the maid who had brought your clothes up yesterday but you figured that if she didn’t know, she would at least find you someone that did.

The mere thought of having a shower sent chills down your spine. The idea of having to stand naked for a moment longer in this house was unnerving, but the combined residue of sweat and tears from last night was too uncomfortable to ignore. You had a quick shower, and as you stepped outside, wiping the mist away from the bathroom mirror, you slightly gasped as you realized what the maid had been staring at earlier. The entire area around your collarbone was bruised dark red and blue. You tried covering it up with makeup but you didn’t quite have enough of the correct product. You then did your makeup with the limited number of cosmetics you had in your purse, and tied up your unwashed hair into a bun. You checked your phone to see that it was half past six.

You found your dried clothes from yesterday steamed and hung in your room. You buttoned up
your dress and as you tied your ribbon at the front of your dress, you made a phone call to one of your secretaries, Asano. The signal was weak and constantly interrupted but there was a raging typhoon outside, you had to make do.

“I have to be in Seoul by ten today,” you informed as soon as he picked up. From the way he had answered his phone, you figured that he had either just woken up or you had woken him up.

“Huh? OH. Good Morning, ma’am!” he greeted more collectedly once he recognized your voice. “The typhoon has calmed down from last night, but all transportation is still paralyzed. Everyone has been advised to stay indoors and not be on the road unless absolutely essential until further notice. Airplanes aren’t taking off from Domino airport yet either.”

“What are you, reading a public safety announcement? I could have told you that by looking out my window. I told you to get me to Seoul, not give me ten ways how not to,” you countered, “This is essential, or are you implying that I’m just anyone?” you snapped. He immediately recoiled. “Put me through to a pilot.”

“Right away!”

“I need to get to Seoul within the next four hours,” you repeated to the pilot.

“It will be difficult to get the jet at flying altitude given the severe weather conditions.”

“Good, so it’s possible. Be on standby with a chopper to take me to the hangar.” You ordered before hanging up, ignoring his protests.

You were aware that the measures you were taking were somewhat extreme, but securing this contract was of the utmost importance, you told yourself. You definitely weren’t being a child and trying to run away from Kaiba. For the past few months, you had been discussing a partnership with a prominent South Korean entertainment agency to secure the exclusive management rights in Japan and China for their top ranking girl group. You couldn’t mess this up because of a little rain and some breeze, you’ve come too far.

…

Having retrieved your belongings, you returned back to Kaiba’s room. You figured he’d be pretty peeved if you landed your helicopter in his garden without his consent, not that he had asked for your consent last night when had decided to spare you within an inch of forcefully having sex with you.

As you stepped into the room, you noticed that the bed was empty, the sheets sprawled out messily. You saw a golden glow seeping out of the ensuite bathroom. The door was left open.

You hesitated as you approached it. After last night’s events, you felt a little displaced around the man. As you cautiously walked into the bathroom, you saw him bent over the sink, washing his face, his shirt from earlier hanging on the golden rail on the wall adjacent to him.

His physique was lean; his muscles were well defined without being burly. You found your breath caught in your throat at the mere sight of him. This was the first time you had seen him exposed. The tips of his hair had droplets of water dripping down, some strands sticking to his face. He leaned his toned arms against the marble of the sink, his back curved over, and his face looking down.
“Disappointed?” he smirked, without looking in your direction. You had wondered what he had meant when you realized that your eyes had accidentally wandered down to his lower half, which was still fully clothed. You would die before you admitted it.

“I was wondering if you would care if I landed a chopper in your courtyard?” you exclaimed, desperately trying to change the subject.

“Why do you ask?” He inquired as he dried his face with a towel, chest still entirely exposed.

“I would have them drop me a ladder and climb right out the third window, but the weather won’t allow for that, especially not in heels, and I don’t think your gardener would appreciate me using your orange grove as a runway for my jet, not that there’s enough space.” You were half blabbering out of nervousness, half being sarcastic at his obvious question, you had dealt with too many idiots already today and it wasn’t even seven in the morning, but mostly honestly listing out your thought process.

He raised an eyebrow. “It’s too dangerous to fly. Can it be helped?”

“No.” You simply responded, informing your pilot to come pick you up.

“I’ll fly you.” There was no way Kaiba would be this generous, you told yourself. Your heart still skipped a beat all the same.

Stop acting like some frivolous school girl, you scolded yourself.

“What difference does it make?” you asked him, staring up into his cerulean orbs, while instinctively stepping back as he stepped towards you. It was unnerving, but the best way to predict the enemy’s move was to look at the movement of their eyes. Not that you should be considering your potential future husband as your enemy.

“Are you afraid of me?” He asked you in a low voice, approaching you. He raised his hand up to your chest and ran his thumb over the marks he had left. You couldn’t tell if his lips were curved up very slightly. The sexual tension felt suffocating. You felt vulnerable around him, especially sexually, physically he could easily dominate you and that was disconcerting. You didn’t want him to know you were afraid, so you stood your ground, holding your head high. The only other option really was stepping back and getting pushed up against the bathroom door.

“No,” you lied breathily. You tried maintaining your composure under his gaze the best you could, but you couldn’t help your chest rising and falling as rapidly as it did. You suspected that he has seen through your lie when he smirked.

“For an actress, you’re a terrible liar.”

At the very least, he was avoiding talking about the many events of last night, which you were grateful for.

You didn’t respond. He hadn’t bothered correcting your perception of him.

“I’m going away to Seoul, on business, for a week.” You explained to him, still in your breathy voice, looking away from him. You didn’t know why you felt obliged to, he hadn’t asked. He also didn’t respond.

The two of you stood in silence for a few awkward moments, before you heard the sound of the spinning blades of the helicopter.
“Excuse me, Mr. Kaiba,” you said side stepping around him, walking out of the room. It felt awkward calling a man that had stripped you naked and groped you ‘Mr. Kaiba,’ but you felt that calling him Seto would add unwelcome intimacy into the situation.

…

After your dramatic exit by helicopter, you had transferred to your jet. Thoughts of last night’s endeavours circled your head like a flock of vultures, eating away at you as you read over your schedule for next week in Seoul. Following the contract finalization, you had two magazine interviews, one live radio interview, three variety show filming sessions and another photoshoot for a magazine spread. You were also hoping to fit some time in to consider some script offers you had received for a couple of your artists. You weren’t entirely too concerned about the two magazine interviews as they revolved more around your career rather than your personal life. What did concern you was the radio interview, which though scripted prior to the dating issue; the host was known for ‘freestyling’ parts of it. It was also live, leaving no room for mistakes. You could feel dread building up again as you realized that you knew virtually nothing about the man you were claiming to ‘date.’

You then diverted your attention to the circus that was the media frenzy, which you had been avoiding for the past twenty-four hours, partially because you were off the grid with no connection, but mostly because you had tried to convince yourself that you could care less. Alas, you cared, you cared a lot.

For the most part, the feedback was positive, many news outlets dubbing you Japan’s power couple, which wasn’t expected or cliché in the least bit. No, no your skin crawling at the overwhelming originality of the concept.

Much of the media though felt compelled to express how unexpected the combination of your characters were. They compared your relationship to an angel being seduced by the likes of Lucifer, a naïve, impressionable young woman being manipulated by a dark and calculating corporate CEO. Again, they wrote novels of your ‘unfortunate,’ as they dubbed it plight, titled with interesting headlines, reading to the effects of ‘Beauty and the Beast,’ and changing your title from the Nation’s fairy to ‘Satan’s fairy.’ Yes, they were that bad. The implication or rather the outright declaration that you were some pure, innocent, angelic virgin made your organs shrivel up and die, because with the exception of the last one, the rest couldn’t be further from the truth. Then again, it was highly amusing reading how Kaiba was portrayed in all this mess, considering the press and media seemed to have no reservations in ‘dancing with the devil,’ the devil being Seto Kaiba, which was precisely what they had accused you of doing. Ultimately you decided that how Kaiba was being talked about was his concern, not yours, and that as your image couldn’t be helped, it was best to let it run its course.

…

After the contract was finalized successfully in your favour, and later almost blinding yourself in the hotel room by firing a champagne cork straight into your eye in celebration, the rest of the week went interestingly. You zoned out twice, both times, much to your displeasure, your thoughts had been occupied by a certain blue-eyed CEO you weren’t currently too fond of, once in the middle of one of the magazine interviews, while they were questioning you about something completely unrelated and the second, while you were in an elevator trying to leave the building to make it in time to your next schedule, causing you to end up back on the top floor, when you failed
to leave when the elevator reached the ground floor. You had held your attention together a little better during the filming of the talk show and the one of the other variety shows over the course of the week.

Then, during the live radio interview, when they asked you what things or gestures you found romantic and wished your significant other would do, which was a slight diversion from the script, you panicked and completely botched it by saying that you adored old fashioned love letters, cherry-blossom viewing and tea ceremonies. The fans seemed to love the response, which was a relief but you were petrified for the rest of the program. You had never even been to a tea ceremony during your time in Japan so you prayed they wouldn’t ask you for details, and your Japanese literature skills weren’t that sharp so you wondered if you could even understand if Seto Kaiba wrote you a love letter. The answer to the last one was simple, he would never write a love letter, so you didn’t have to worry about deciphering one. He could care less if your hair flowed in the wind or if petals danced in your hair, or however they were supposed to be written, you didn’t know. All he cared about as pinning you to a bed, table, really anything and having his way with you – you had gotten carried off on a tangent, again.

You had two missed calls from Kaiba that evening, after your radio interview, but you had gotten home from the broadcasting station around midnight after filming the last variety show that you just went straight to bed. Even if you had had the time, raiding a street food stall was higher in your list of priorities than calling him back. Yes, you were going to act like a child for once. Responsibilities and obligations be damned, you told yourself, as you set your alarm for three in the morning.

Had you known that the phone calls you didn’t return could potentially have been the single most important ones in determining the course of the rest of your life; you probably would have acted a little differently.

Over the course of the past week, you had realized how different your life had been before Seto Kaiba had so arrogantly invited himself in. Your life had a certain degree of routine and constancy. You had only physically been with the man for less than forty-eight hours and those forty-eight hours had felt like a lifetime, and your life before that felt like a distant memory. Right now, being away from him, you were experiencing a sensation of free falling. It was the feeling of coming up for air after being under water for a long time, but it was not suffocation you had been feeling under water, rather, intoxication, and strangely, and much to your dismay, you were craving it.

... When you flew back to Domino, you were in for quite a rude awakening, there now seemed to be a repeating theme of something always going horribly wrong in your absence. An emergency, director’s board meeting was called, which never meant anything good for anyone, and the topic of discussion was marriage.

The details were not disclosed to you until the meeting, because well, revealing that Kaiba corp. had sent a marriage contract for your legal directors to review, over the phone would be underwhelming. No, bombs like those were meant to be dropped in person.

The situation basically boiled down to Kaiba sending a marriage contract, basically declaring he will be marrying you, to every member of your director board. The contract, covering everything from the creation of a marital estate, how it will be inherited or divided, etcetera, was surprisingly written in a way that was equally favourable to both of you. From a legal stand point, you had no reason to object, and neither did your highly qualified legal team. This precisely, was the problem,
you had no way out – he had you completely cornered. Your board was, as you had predicted, ecstatic.

Kaiba had taken a word you had slipped while he was threatening to fuck you senseless and made a very consequential decision out of it. You couldn’t quite process the weight of it to actually have any responding emotion to it just yet.

Currently, you were sitting in absolute shock, entirely baffled, while your directors were quite aggressively threatening your position as CEO, in order to coerce you into this marriage. It was not that your directors didn’t regard you highly or that they all despised you; though you were sure some did, but the possibility of your conglomerate being linked to his through marriage was too extraordinary an opportunity to carelessly lose.

“It was fortunate that Mr. Kurosawa,” one board member drawled, “had someone he considered a daughter, like yourself to take over the family business, considering how early he passed away from illness without any next of kin.” You knew that what he had really meant by that was how unfortunate it was that the corporation had to be passed outside of the family, bypassing in the process many of the founding board members of the company, including himself. “This is a prime example depicting the importance of an heir,” he continued. “Even if no heirs are present immediately following the marriage, in the unlikely event that your position needs to be passed on, Mr. Kaiba would make an excellent successor. And of course, you to him,” he quickly added that last part as a response to your irritated glare. That whole commentary didn’t sit right with you.

“As much as I considered him to be a father figure, I was not biologically related to the late Mr. Kurosawa, therefore it is not possible for me to inherit his genetic illnesses, so you may all rest assured. Also, make no mistake, I rose to this position on my own merits, and as much as that may displease some of you to hear this, I did so by surpassing you, not in any occasion bypassing you.”

Mr. Kurosawa was the founder, of the entertainment agency that you had succeeded. He had been your saviour when you had run away from the clutches of your abusive step-mother and helped raise you to attain the wealth and fame you have today. You would be lying if you alleged that how you met him was entirely based on fate, quite frankly you didn’t believe in such things, but also because there was a certain degree of manipulation that you had had your hand in to create those turn of events, which also eventually led to you inheriting his business. Regardless of the definition, you had earned everything you were in possession of today on your own merits and that you wouldn’t allow for anyone to challenge.

“The board really did not want to bring this up,” another member interjected, “but your own, biological mother, as well as your maternal grandmother – whose husband’s company you recently acquired – both passed before they reached their thirties.”

“Unnecessary to the matter at hand,” you shot back. Your mother was the original heiress to your grandfather’s gaming conglomerate. She unfortunately passed when you were barely a year old from illnesses related to depression, a while after she had discovered your father’s mistress. Your grandmother you weren’t entirely sure of.

“No the contrary,” the board members continued, listing out all the reasons why the possibility of a shorter life span could be threatening to your position, and then branching out to discuss all the business advantages of this union.

You couldn’t possibly object to every argument they made in favour of the marriage, and at the conclusion of almost a four and a half hour debate, all the reasons you had to object were selfish ones, which would not benefit the corporation in any way.
They were threatening to hold a vote to decide if you were suited to continue in your position as the head of the company, declaring that if you could not be responsible enough to sacrifice your personal interests for the sake of the corporation, you did not deserve to wield the power and influence you were in possession of. You knew that you had more than enough shares within the company for it to not be a real threat, but it wasn’t entirely unrealistic for them to remove you either. It would be immensely difficult, but possible.

“In a position such as yours, you do not have the luxury to marry out of love.” That was the nail on the head.

It was true, you couldn’t deny it, and you could not afford to put your needs ahead of the welfare and interests of the thousands of employees and their families that depended on your corporation thriving, to survive.

For a moment, you considered stepping down from your position, but you had worked too hard to achieve it, you found yourself too attached to your efforts to let go.

You couldn’t be a child anymore. In fact, it was when you were a child that you learnt that in life, you live while making decision you don’t always like.

…

That afternoon, you, a select few members from the director board, as well as department heads from the legal team headed to Kaiba.corp to finalize the contract and sign the marriage registration.

As you entered Kaiba’s office, you noticed that he was wearing a black suit today. You looked down at your own knee-length, pleated, white dress, and grimaced at the irony of the resemblance of an actual bride and groom. It hadn’t been intentional. If you had known, you would have worn bright orange for the occasion or perhaps a sickly lime green.

As you sat across from him, signing the many documents, you couldn’t bring yourself to look at him. You continued focusing intently on the documents in front of you, occasionally listening to your lawyers when they would highlight something of importance. The extensive contract was signed with an added non-disclosure agreement. The agreement basically declared that this marriage would be kept a secret from the public until you two have been ‘dating’ in the public eye for an adequate period of time and that only you and Kaiba have the authority to announce it, and for all intents and purposes, this was not an arranged marriage. This confidentiality agreement was to be signed by everyone involved in this process in some way or other, regardless of whether they were present right at this moment.

The one clause you had wanted to negotiate was also the one that Kaiba was adamant on not negotiating. It was the one pertaining to the living arrangements. The contract stated that following the marriage going into effect, plainly put, after the marriage was registered, you were to move into the Kaiba mansion immediately. At this point, you didn’t even have enough energy to argue with him and just caved.

As you signed the marriage registration document, you could feel your hand trembling. Your face contorted, wanting to cry, but you so desperately wanted to hold your composure together in front of all these suits, so you drew in a sharp breath and continued. As Kaiba signed the registration, you closed your eyes, looking away. Finally, his legal director signed as witness, and the papers were sent off to city hall.
Kaiba’s sharp-eyed gaze that you could see from your peripherals felt crushing.

What you felt by him wasn’t intoxication anymore; it was starting to feel suffocating. You had hoped to feel angry, sad or frightened, when you met him you had wanted to be infuriated at him, but all those emotions had pooled together and all you could feel was a sensation of asphyxiation. ‘There was not enough oxygen reaching my lungs. There was not enough oxygen reaching my lungs,’ was all that kept repeating in your mind.

You heard the suits start clapping in celebration, but it all blended into this roaring background noise, as you shakily pushed yourself off of your chair. While standing up you had told yourself that you were leaving to get some fresh air, but once you were standing, you weren’t sure anymore. Perhaps as a result of not having eaten since the morning of the day before, or the pure shock from the absurdity of the situation coursing through your veins, you couldn’t form a thought anymore. You turned to leave.

You might have heard your name being called, you might have imagined it, you tried to cast your gaze ahead of you but all your vision caught was the world falling down in front of you.

In your subconscious state, you wondered if perhaps it was you who was falling. No, a voice said, your world was definitely collapsing before your eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think! :)
Perhaps The Great Loves Come With Tears

Chapter Notes

I've basically taken to writing this fic full time now with it being summer break.

This chapter is a little bit different from the ones before it because it deals more with the emotional development of the characters rather than plot development. I still think it's extremely important to the plot line so I hope you enjoy.

Fair warning, prepare yourself for drama!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Numbness was all you felt. The burden of all the emotions, from the resentment, fear and shock had molded itself into an unfeeling heaviness. It was so harrowing, that even in your unconscious state; you could feel it, driving a stake into your being.

How could someone so beautiful, be so cruel? Obviously, after all that you’ve endured in your life, being married to Seto Kaiba wasn’t the worst possible thing that could happen. In fact, any other sane woman would have rejoiced, but you weren’t ready for this.

In some distant corner of your consciousness, you pondered a great number of things. You wondered how you should react to this sudden escalation of events, how was someone of your stature expected to act? You didn’t know. Surely, throwing a tantrum like a petulant child would be unbecoming, but you were young, so very young. You contemplated destroying all that was unbearable and suffocating you, but you couldn’t feel enough rage to fuel those intents. Antagonizing the most powerful man in Japan didn’t seem very rational. Between the two of you, you would probably destroy half the continent.

Ultimately, you had nothing say, nothing to ask. You pondered a great number of things, but each one had led you nowhere. You desperately wanted to feel something, anything. You feared the thought of growing comfortable with the feeling of suffocation.

...

When you opened your eyes, you were back in his room. The carved decorations where the white ceilings met the blue walls were enough to tell. A dark blue hue filled the room, the gold streams of light from the table lamps, lifting the darkness. Through the undrawn curtains and beyond the large open windows that led to the balcony, you could see that it was nighttime, the navy blue sky speckled with the silver stars.

“You’re awake.” You snapped your head to the right to look at the man you had not noticed sitting by your bedside.

His hair fell uncaringly, undone and slightly damp, as if he had recently come out of the shower. Dressed in a loosely fitted navy sweater with a shallow neck and black pants, you almost didn’t recognize him, almost. His deep cerulean blue eyes and distracting good looks gave him away.
“Yes,” you managed, the voice that came out was a lot smaller than you had intended. He placed the tablet he had been occupying himself with on the bedside table, and reached over, picking up what looked like a wet cloth that had been previously sitting on your forehead. He dropped it over the edge of a water basin on the nightstand.

“You have a slight fever,” he explained, “I had my personal physician check on you after you fainted. You fainted from excessive stress. Are you feeling better?” His tone was rough but somewhat concerned.

“I don’t know,” you replied honestly.

“Are you hungry?” he spoke after a few more moments of consideration.

“No.”

“You need to eat.”

“I’m not hungry.” You dismissed him weakly, as you turned on your side to face away from him.

“You’re on the verge of anemia.” He asserted. You knew you had been neglecting your health. It wasn’t intentional, and you didn’t know it had progressed this far.

“You don’t need to pretend that you care. That wasn’t a clause in the contract. Don’t worry, I won’t die on you.” You scoffed.

“Look at me.” He demanded. “You’re my wife and your health is my concern.” He declared, stressing the ‘is.’ “Acting like a disgruntled child won’t change our situation.”

“Well you married a child!” you shot back, quite literally shooting out of your lying position to sitting up and stare daggers at Kaiba, your arm supporting you as you tried to lean forward. You had more to say, much more, but your sudden motion sent your head spinning and you fell forward as your arm folded under you.

Kaiba reached out one hand instinctively, catching you with ease.

“It certainly looks that way.”

His response sent you seething. He slowly leaned you back with both arms on to the headboard.

“I didn’t ask you to marry me!” you stated in the most intimidating voice you could muster, though what came out was severely below your usual standards. He still had his hands on your shoulders, back bent over. “There are so many women out there, screaming for you to sign their bras, literally throwing themselves at you, and you come for me. Did I do something that landed me on blacklist? Have I offended you in some way?” You couldn’t stop yourself.

“Do you think being married to me is some sort of punishment?” He voice was so low you could barely hear it. His eyes contorted into a dangerous glare.

“No! But I do think you should have asked me how I felt about this before acting on your own!”

“I did ask you, and you said yes.” Was he serious?

“I said yes when you were threatening to fuck me senseless. I imagine I said ‘yes’ to many number of things you forcefully did to me that night. Mr. Kaiba, you can hardly expect a sober answer from someone when you have your fingers so far buried in them that they can see stars!” That outburst
elicited a smirk from him; you failed to understand which part had been so amusing. He stood upright again, and sat back into his chair.

“I’m glad you enjoyed our little affair.” He taunted.

“I never said I enjoyed it!”

“Can you deny it?”

You couldn’t form the words, you felt a deep crimson rising to your cheeks, and your heartbeat accelerated as your outrage grew exponentially. His smirk also grew wider. You felt the overwhelming urge to smother him with a pillow.

“And, call me Seto, it’s strange hearing you call me by my last name.”

“Why would you do it?” your voice was overcome with distress. “I didn’t consent to this marriage and I refuse to be in a relationship with someone that doesn’t see me as an equal.”

“That doesn’t answer my question. Why would you do it?” You pushed on, tears pricking your eyes.

“I had my reasons.”

“Tell me!” you screamed.

“Because I couldn’t allow some other man to have you!” He finally exploded, voice echoing through the empty room.

“You-- What?” Your voice cracked. You had no idea what he was talking about, but in his current state you were afraid to probe.

“I wanted you.” He growled huskily, rephrasing himself, his deep blue eyes forcefully holding your gaze. That still didn’t answer your question. Why did he want you?

There was a long silence before you spoke.

“I’ve never been in love.” Your voice was so quiet you wondered if he had even heard, until he slowly looked up at you from the spot he’d been staring at on the carpet. His gaze was still hard. You kept your own gaze focused straight ahead as you spoke. “You were the first man I’ve ever been with that way, that’s seen me like that, and touched me like that.” You wondered what had possessed you to tell him these things. It made you feel vulnerable telling him these things but your words left you faster than you could process your thoughts. You felt obligated to clear up what you assumed was a misunderstanding.

“I see.”

“Did you already know those things about me?” you asked at his impassive reaction.

“I did.”

You had suspected as much. You didn’t know what to do with that information. This confession of his left you even more confused about his earlier confession. Which man was he so concerned about taking you away?
You could physically feel the tension as he almost reluctantly leaned over and felt your forehead with the back of his hand, his face entirely void of emotion. You held your breath as his hand made contact with your face. It was difficult to breath when he was that close.

…

You hadn’t had much appetite to eat what the maids had brought up to you, so after almost throwing back up the few bites Seto had forced you to eat, you got ready to go back to bed. The dress you had been wearing was too restricting, but you didn’t have any of your clothes in the mansion yet, so you unwillingly changed into one of his shirts again. As you lay in bed facing away from Seto, lying on the other side, his hostility from earlier unrelenting, despair started slowly washing over you again as the gravity of the situation you were entangled in began to resurface in your thoughts. The same fears you’ve always had started eating at you from the inside. You resolve began weakening, and an unwelcome emptiness started filling you.

“Would you hold me?” you hadn’t meant to say that aloud. You didn’t even remember forming that thought.

For a moment everything remained very still, you forced your eyes shut, fearing that he had rejected you, and then you felt the mattress shift underneath as he moved closer. Wordlessly, he wrapped his arms around you, pulling you into his chest, but somehow you still felt displaced. His embrace felt warm and comforting, but it also felt forced and distant. You felt you were feeding meaning to one of those emotions, but you didn’t know to which.

The room was so silent it was unsettling. His well-defined chest pressed against your back, you could hear his unstable breathing. It wasn’t as choppy as yours, but you could sense his uncertainty in how tense his muscles felt. It wasn’t the first time he had ‘held’ you, considering you woke up with his arm around you the last time, but it was the first time you were both awake, where he had done it intentionally. It was both awkward and strange and you almost wanted to ask him to let go.

‘So this is what it feels like being held by the most powerful man in the country,’ you mused to yourself.

For a very long time, neither of you spoke.

“You don’t have to hold me if it’s uncomfortable to you.” You said meekly breaking the silence. You felt embarrassed for having asked to be held, and especially now that he was feeling so uncomfortable. Did he not want you this way?

“Go to sleep.” He commanded, tightening his grip.

…

As you drifted to sleep, in that realm between sleep and reality, you were reminded of Seto’s words. It might not have been a voluntary decision, but regardless, you consciously signed yourself into this marriage.
Of all the things that were riding on this marriage, letting it fail would be your greatest unhappiness. You had come too far for your life to be derailed by a failed marriage. You told yourself not to expect too much. You had entered this marriage for reasons beyond love and confidence, and you’d have to maintain this marriage for those same reasons. He liked you enough to hold you at night, and he’s not the kind of man who would do something like that if he didn’t want to. And this, you told yourself would be enough. It should have been enough.

Then a voice asked you, would he still hold you the same tomorrow? Or will he hold someone else? How long before he grows tired of you or tired of the façade of liking you enough to tolerate you?

You could feel your heart wrench, as your insecurities flowed out with silent tears, down your face in unseen streams in the dark. You didn’t need him to hold you, you hadn’t married him expecting him to, you reminded yourself bitterly, but the tears just wouldn’t stop.

You wondered why that thought had pricked at your heartstrings that much.

…

The next time you woke up, it was still dark outside. The phone on your bedside read two twenty-three a.m. You weren’t sure what had woken you, just that your eyelids had fluttered open to stare up at the dark ceiling. You could feel Seto’s body leaning on to yours, arms still around you.

For reasons you couldn’t comprehend, a sense of horror overtook you. A wave of anxiety swept through you. You felt as if your skin had separated from your being. It was almost as if the seriousness of the situation had finally sunken through.

All of your rationalization and logic prior to this moment felt as if you had been evaluating someone else’s situation, someone else’s life. In this moment, it finally felt like it was your own, it was personal, and it was terrifying. This was your life, your only life, and all you could see ahead now were dead ends. You were trapped. This wasn’t some ache that would go away after a good night’s sleep. You would live like this for the next eighty something years of your life.

You would never fall in love. You never realized how much you had wanted that.

A familiar sensation of oxygen not reaching your lungs overwhelmed you. You started suffocating on thin air. You wanted to pry yourself out of his grasp and escape to somewhere far away before you fell apart completely, submitting to the oncoming panic attack that you were all too familiar with. You willed your muscles to move but your consciousness was so focused on trying to breathe that you were incapable of doing anything else. Pulling yourself up so your neck was leaning on the headboard was as far as you could manage.

You tried to supress your sobbing, and quieten the cries that escaped, but you couldn’t breathe. You tilted your head towards the ceiling, parting your lips. You couldn’t breathe. You clenched your fists around the sheets as you felt light headed, your mind spinning, and your grasp on reality began slipping.

You had slipped so far that you didn’t register the movement next to you. Your panic attack had escalated faster than you had anticipated.

You lost your restraint to be quiet, you needed air, you clutched your throat, nails digging into your
skin, clawing at your chest to make the feeling of asphyxiation disappear. You were thrashing your legs tangled in the sheets, because movement gave you a false sensation of freedom. Your body collapsed into itself, panting, you were making it worse. Strangled cries escaped your throat mixed together with uncontrollable weeping.

You had held in your fears for so long that when they escaped, they came out exponentially more violent. You liked to believe that you were hard hearted and cold blooded, and in your work you were, but you weren’t nearly as cold hearted as Seto Kaiba. You didn’t know how he was navigating himself through this so well, but you couldn’t contain yourself that way. Maybe he just didn’t care.

The thought of Kaiba seeing you in this state flashed across your mind and it made things worse. He would hate you, he wouldn’t want you, but you didn’t know where to begin to make it stop.

You heard your name being called, and then again and again. You heard it but your mind failed to identify it as your name. Words you couldn’t quite comprehend followed, all behind a deafening wall of blank noise. All you could see was blackness.

You tried to claw at your chest again, willing for it to open up and take some air in but your hands were forcefully pulled away and detained. You felt a pressure against your pelvis and thighs, an unmovable weight. You refused to let it contain you so you struggled against this force.

“Pull yourself together. You’re not suffocating, there’s enough oxygen reaching your lungs. It’s in your head!” You heard a harsh voice ordering you. “You’re hyperventilating! You’re making it worse!”

Your body became aware of the sensation of it being shaken. Your eyes allowed you a blurry image of blue eyes framed with tousled brown hair above you. He had released your arms and without you realizing they had found themselves to his forearms, nails digging themselves in, trying to anchor yourself.

“Look at me!” he commanded, but you were unresponsive to his requests. “You need to get out of your own head!” You felt your eyes snap up at him in response. “Look at me! Look at me and breathe slower.” You complied, and slowly, very slowly, you felt the burning sensation leaving your lungs, but your crying intensified with the new found sense of freedom.

“I’ve made a terrible mistake.” You confessed in between your crying. “I can’t keep doing this – for the rest of my life. I thought I could – I,” your nails dug deeper into his skin, “I thought I would be okay with you being with other women, but I can’t share you, I –” You were spewing absolute, disjointed nonsense. Everything you had wanted to say had come spilling out at once in jumbled chaos.

“What the hell are you on about?” His acutely irritated voice cut you off. “What is it that you want? Do you know what you want?” You couldn’t respond as disorderly sobs hopelessly escaped you. “Why would I have married you if I wanted to sleep around? Have I done something to give you that impression?” Your heart skipped a beat as his glare intensified.

“My father –” you were doing a poor job of explaining. “He – my step-mother, his mistress,” your sobs prevented you from elaborating further.

He seemed to have gotten the idea because in his straddled position on his knees, with his back curved over you, he hung his head.

“Was my answer to you that night inadequate?” he finally asked sighing.
“A man can lust for more than one woman.” Somewhere along the lines, your crying had calmed down.

“I’m not any man,” he almost snarled, before pausing for a moment. “I won’t do that…to you.”

That was somewhat reassuring. It should have been entirely reassuring, but there were hidden nooks and old cracks that his words didn’t quite reach. You worried if those insecurities, the fragments that won’t listen would tear you relationship apart.

When Seto finally lay back down, he laid on his back. He didn’t attempt to hold you, or speak to you; you didn’t want to say much more either.

A long silence endured.

“I should have known something like this would happen when you cried yourself to sleep.”

You could feel your blood flow backwards. He knew?

“I’m sorry… I know you don’t get much sleep as it is.” He didn’t respond. “I imagine you regret your decision to marry me.”

“Have you given me reason to?”

Was that a trick question?

“Many.”

“Hardly.” He continued long after you had assumed he was done speaking, “I didn’t expect a perfect marriage.”

“Oh.” You weren’t sure how to receive that.

Chapter End Notes

I always appreciate hearing what you think so do let me know! :)}
It was still fairly dark in the room when you woke up the next morning. You were woken by the sensation of something leaving you. You opened your eyes to Seto lifting his hand away from your forehead as he sat up on the bed next to you. He brought down the back of his hand again to meet the side of your neck, confirming that your fever had indeed died down. Your body stiffened at his touch.

“Are you feeling better?” he inquired, his somewhat rougher morning voice sending shivers down your spine.

“Yes, quite,” you words left your lips in a whisper, as you tried and failed to bring yourself to look at him.

“You look awful.” Ouch. That stung, that really stung. Between last night’s episode, his comment about not expecting a perfect marriage and now this, it disturbed your thoughts greatly. It occurred to you that he’s never once called you attractive. You had the nation’s men falling at your feet, and yet the one you wanted the affections of not only seemed to be immune, but apparently also found you unsightly. Apart from that one night, he hasn’t even made anymore advances towards you.

Then again, maybe you just haven’t given him enough time.

“So I?” was all you could manage to say. You needed to try harder, you pushed yourself. He had seen too much of the ugly, you needed to do something to make him stay. There was a knock at the door, distracting you from your thoughts as Seto swiftly removed himself from the bed and walked up to open it.

“Master Kaiba, we retrieved the belongings as per your request.” You recognized the woman as the head maid of the estate. You propped yourself on your elbows to get a better view. Seto swung the door open to let her in and several other maids followed suit with four or five trunks. They bowed to both of you as they left; you hesitantly acknowledged their greetings with a nod as they filed out in an orderly fashion, closing the door behind them. There was one maid with fairly large eyes that held your gaze as she bowed to you, instead of casting them down respectfully. You thought her stare was rather odd but decided to make nothing of it.
“I had some of your belongings brought over for the time being.” Seto spoke motioning towards the trunks.

You almost asked him how he had managed to get into your penthouse. Then you remembered that for Seto Kaiba, the president of the largest gaming corporation in the world that much was child’s play. You were just grateful to have something to change into.

“Thank you,” you simply said.

It was seven past six, or something like that in the morning and you had to be at a costume fitting in an hour for an upcoming drama of yours. Seto had offered for you to use the shower first. He said he figured you would take longer. You would have found this assumption offensive, had it not been true.

It was a large bathroom as expected; shaped similarly to a ‘L.’ The massive bathtub and enclosed shower were placed further inside the bathroom, away from the double sink that was closer to the door. Over the sound of the running water, you hadn’t heard the door opening. As you stepped out of the shower, you noticed that Seto was bent over the sink again, shirtless like last time, washing his face. He seemed to have just finished shaving.

From where you were standing, the first thing that had caught your eye were the red, scratch marks that extended down his forearms. Your eyes went wide as realization of what they were dawned on you. Without thinking, you walked up to his side, grabbing on to his right arm to inspect them closer.

“Did I do this?” you gasped quietly, horrified.

“Don’t worry about.” He dismissed, trying to pull his arm away.

“You’re bleeding! How can I not?” You resisted his pull, holding on to his arm.

“It’s fine, besides, it’s not like it’s the first time.” Your horror grew as you noticed the faint scars under the new scratches, remembering the night the generator had gone down. You noticed he insisted on looking away. You failed to realize that you were still scantily clad in a towel that was tied revealingly low around your chest, in an attempt to extend the tiny clothe far down enough, and even then it was barely concealing what it was meant to. Your hair was plastered to your face that was flushed from the hot shower and the water from the ends ran down your body, pooling into your cleavage.

“Oh god, I’m so sorry,” you breathed, stepping closer, careful not to run your fingers over the wounds. “Where do you keep the gauze?” you asked panicking.

“I’m not going to bandage my whole arm over some nail marks you left on me.”

“But it’s going to scar!” you protested, reaching around for his other arm.

“It’s already scarred!” he snapped, causing you to look up at him with mild surprise. His face also still had droplets of water running down in streams, hair damp and sticking to his forehead.

“I’m sorry.” You said almost reflexively, a little taken aback by the way he looked back at you with a stony facial expression.

“Don’t do this to me this early in the morning,” he growled, draping a light blue robe you assumed was his over your shoulders. “Go put some clothes on,” he ordered as he leaned on you with his hands on your shoulders.
Momentarily, you felt your ears burning and your brain lag, before you quickly collected yourself and hurriedly saw yourself out.

…

Seto had insisted on driving you to your costume fitting, on your way there, you learned a thing or two about the man, especially regarding his patience. For one, he didn’t have any, especially during morning rush hour, and two, he didn’t like having his motives questioned.

“I’m concerned about the living arrangements,” you advised him. He looked over at you from the driver’s seat with his brows furrowed, waiting for you to continue. “I understand moving in with you after the marriage is publicly announced for the sake of it appearing genuine, but the decision for me to live in the manor right now…” you trailed off, unsure how to word your question without sounding condescending, “it’s illogical. Moving in with my ‘boyfriend’ after announcing that we were dating a week ago is going to stir up so many rumours, controversy and speculation.” Japan was a conservative nation, East Asia in general was that way to a great extent; a place where dating was seen by fans as a scandalous affair. Moving in together after a week would pretty much cause the media’s pretty little heads to explode. You had been contemplating the reasoning behind this decision since it was brought up but never had the opportunity to discuss it.

“I’m aware. I’ll take care of the media should the occasion arise for it.” He was quite plainly avoiding your question.

“I’m more than capable of taking care of the media myself,” you snapped, irritated, “I’m asking you for your rationalization behind your decision.”

“I have my reasons.”

“What reasons?”

“Just drop it.” He ordered through gritted teeth, tightening his grip on the steering wheel as he stared straight ahead. You weren’t having it.

“Don’t dismiss me like I’m some sort of child! Answer me!”

“You are a child!” he barked. This was going nowhere fast.

He pulled up to the studio for your fitting.

“Don’t address me in that tone of voice,” you bit back, stressing the ‘don’t,’ as you stepped out of the car, slamming the door shut behind you. You would have argued with him to submission, had you not been on the verge of running late.

As you stepped out of the elevators, on to the floor the costume designer’s studio was located, you started questioning many of the motives fueling your husband’s decisions, everything from your marriage to your living arrangements, his vague responses were starting to feel borderline suspicious.

…
You were robed in an ofurisode style kimono, with beautifully hand painted silk sleeves that reached the ground. It was a midnight blue with dainty, intricate golden lace inspired paint decorating the edges. They were adding some final touches to the sleeves as well as ensuring that it fit properly.

You were standing; your hands were outstretched to allow for the sleeves to drape properly. You switched the tablet you were holding from your left to your right arm, as one of the costume designer’s seamstresses began working on the left sleeve.

You were reading an article about you and Seto. It was the title that had gripped your interest, “The Nation’s Fairy brings even the most powerful man in Japan to his knees.” It read something to the effect of how you had Seto Kaiba wrapped around your finger and how he was completely entranced by your beauty. You couldn’t begin to fathom what part of your public interactions, or the lack there of had given the media this impression, but you knew that the media was uselessly talented at spinning fiction. Still, the implications made by the article couldn’t have been further from the reality of your relationship – beautiful would be the one thing he would probably never find you – and the contrast made you smile bitterly. It upset you a great deal.

“Hold your arms still dear.” One of the seamstresses berated you as your shoulders had begun to droop without realizing.

“Sorry,” you said straightening yourself up.

“You look so refined in that kimono; it’s true what everyone says, your beauty really is a national treasure. It’s no wonder you made the World’s Most Beautiful Women List for People’s magazine again this past April, within the top five again too! Your boyfriend is very lucky to have you. It’s such an honour to meet you in person!” another seamstress gushed.

It was odd, for the compliment you had just received, the only response you could produce was a wry smile and a heavy sigh.

“An unmarried young woman like you really shouldn’t sigh like that, you’re going to invite bad luck,” another seamstress scolded you.

‘It’s a good thing I’m married then,’ you thought, rolling your eyes internally, reminded again of your ‘other half.’ This whole situation was making you feel worse.

…

Returning back to your office later that day after a late morning meeting, your secretary informed that Seto Kaiba was on the line, slightly concerned, you picked up the phone from your desk.

“Why aren’t you picking up your phone? Where have you been?” his voice came through with an irritated edge. You checked up your cell phone to see that you had several missed calls from him. It had been on silent. You wondered what he wanted, questioning how often he was going to do this. You weren’t used to having someone keep tabs on you, and you weren’t exactly too pleased with him at the moment after your little spat about the living arrangements. In fact, you were surprised he had called, because lord knows you wouldn’t have made the first move.
“I was in a meeting having a meltdown, what is it?” You were just returning from having had a fit at your marketing director for the horrendous way he had approved for one of your girl groups to be promoted in China.

You heard him hesitate, almost as if he was reconsidering what to say. After a brief pause he spoke again.

“Are you alright?” You hummed a ‘yes,’ back in response, while looking over some paperwork that was left for you on your desk. “You shouldn’t strain yourself yet, you’re still not well.” You should have been touched by his –rather uncharacteristic – concern but that went right over your head.

“Yes, well, is that what you’re calling about?”

“No. I forgot to ask you this morning, I assume you’re attending the Kawaguchi’s charity ball this evening?”

“Yes, hold on a second,” you cut him off, raising your eyebrow at the nervous looking talent manager that looked like his was going to wet himself at your door. “Which one fucked up this time?” you asked the anxious looking man, referring to the idol band he was in charge of managing.

“What?” you heard Seto’s annoyed voice cut through the phone.

“Not you. Hold on one sec,” you spoke into the receiver.

“I don’t like to be kept waiting,” he growled from the other end.

“Yes, alright fine, you have my undivided attention Mr. Kaiba,” you said almost sarcastically, holding up five fingers towards the man in front of you, signalling him to give you five minutes, just as another woman lined up behind him with a stack of files, probably for you to sign. “Yes unfortunately I will be forced to waste a few hours of my time on this frivolous affair, when I would really rather be at home sleeping. The only reasons I even bothered entertaining the idea was because of the money that will be donated from it to charity. Does that sufficiently answer your question Mr. Kaiba?” Yes, you were going to be petty if he was going to be secretive. “YES I SEE YOU, YOUR PRECIOUS IDOL WON’T EVAPORATE FROM WHATEVER IT IS THAT HE DID, I’LL TAKE CARE OF IT!” you yelled at the manager covering the receiver with your palm, as he grew more agitated by the second. A second call came through to the switchboard’s waiting list. “Don’t we have someone ELSE that can take care of that?” You had meant the phone call.

“I really think you should -- really see this.” He spluttered nervously. Ugh.

“We’re back to this again; didn’t I ask you to stop calling me that?” Seto asked sounding even more exasperated and annoyed. “Are you still hung up on this morning?”

As concerned as you were about your relationship, this really wasn’t the time.

“Yes I’m still hung up on it,” you shot back, placing emphasis on the ‘still,’ just as he had. “This really isn’t a good time.” Another phone call joined the switchboard’s call holding list.

“Fine, just know we’ll be going together.” His assertive tone didn’t agree with you.

“You’re my – ” you cleared your throat, “who else did you assume I would be going with?”

You heard the line click.
'What is wrong with this day?' you asked yourself, massaging your temples. It wasn’t even lunch yet.

...  

“I see your boyfriend made The Most Eligible Bachelors list again this year,” your make-up artist mentioned casually that evening as you were sitting in the hair and makeup chair, waiting for her to get you ready for the party. You quite literally choked on your coffee.

“He did what – of Japan?” you asked correcting yourself while trying to recover from your coughing fit.

“Asia. The Japanese one was release last month, he topped that one too.”

This was ridiculous. You laughed bitterly at the irony. Never mind that people didn’t know you were married but the fact that you two were involved was very public knowledge. You considered the possibility that the list was shortlisted before the two of you announced your relationship, despite the magazine being released today, but that rationalization still failed to appease your anger.

You snatched the magazine from the table lining the mirror to look over the list. He had definitely come in first place, yet again, why were you even surprised. It was just a stupid list, you told yourself, but your self-doubt and uncertainty about your relationship, and how he saw you began to re-surface, threatening to boil over. The insecurities had always been there, just lurking in the shadows when your mind was occupied by other tasks, and constantly living with them was becoming overwhelming.

He was most definitely taken, permanently off the market, you assured yourself, not even paying any mind as the tightness of your grip crumpled the glossy pages of the magazine. And yet, you couldn’t help but wonder if the public saw Seto as still being available. Did they not perceive your relationship to be serious enough? Did Seto share these sentiments? You were getting carried away with your own imagination without even realizing. That didn’t matter though.

This little development had pushed you to such an edge that it had become dangerous. Subconsciously, you were now actively looking for opportunities to find evidence to prove your convictions; Seto didn’t want you, he didn’t find you attractive, he had entered this relationship for the wrong reasons. You were a ticking time bomb.

... But you wanted him to stay.

...  

The Kawaguchi’s charity ball was indeed a frivolous affair, it would be full of haughty, bratty heiresses, trying to find a husband from the high cut collection of conceited heirs, all being chaperoned by their equally pompous parents who will all be subtly trying to outdo and show up each other the entire time, all the while laughing in that nerve gratingly phony laugh.
When you went on this rant, half hoping Seto would suggest staying home—he hadn’t—he instead found this interpretation of yours highly amusing. He had completely agreed, but also found it surprising that someone as amicable as you—at least in comparison to him—would see such occasions in that light.

You weren’t at all thrilled to go, not just because of the frivolity of the occasion, but also because it would be your first public appearance with Seto after the relationship—at least the dating part—was announced to the public. It felt weirder parading around with your husband, all the while calling him your boyfriend. This especially bothered you because ‘dating’ didn’t necessary give the message to many women that he was off-limits; The Most Eligible Bachelor list Seto had topped was proof of that, and not that you were incapable of trusting him—or so you told yourself—but you just knew that there were going to be crowds of women just waiting to grab him despite you being there.

You never fancied yourself the jealous type until now. This whole event was so stressful to you with regards to your marriage that you had become a visible ball of nerves; irritable, on edge and highly sensitive to everything.

You were dressed in a tight-fitting, black, thick strapped, lace, Versace gown that hugged your figure and flared at the knees in a sleek, mermaid style, with the front slightly grazing the floor while the back draped behind you in a dramatic train. You wore diamond, floral - tear drop inspired earrings, with your hair styled in an effortless, slightly wet looking, wavy-straight style, tucked behind your ears, as if you had carelessly sleeked back half-dry hair with your fingers. The makeup was a minimal, glowing look, with a youthful coral lip to contrast the elegance. You opted for simple nude heels.

Seto stuck to a classic black tux, with a bow tie, his hair styled as it always is. He was gorgeous. You really couldn’t seem to tear your eyes away. He didn’t seem to notice.

Seto hadn’t complimented you, and while you dramatically overanalyzed this, you had entirely missed his complete fascination over you. You had missed the way he subtly pressed against your back as he reached for his keys, the suggestive way he had brushed his hands over yours, the way his voice was huskier and dropped lower than usual or the way he had stepped extremely close to you when he spoke, his breath grazing your skin each time. This complete obliviousness plunged you further into an even more disagreeable state.

To your surprise, he offered to drive you both to the Kawaguchi residence in a black BMW of his, instead of his limo, as he mentioned how much you disliked limos. It was true, you really did, and the BMW was more fitting you thought, given that despite how extravagant, it would be too excessive to arrive at an event meant to fund charity in a limo.

You drew an hour outside of Domino, the whole ride ridden with tension, with neither of you saying a word. You may have been feeding meaning into the silence.

Seto opened the door for you, placing a hand over your head as you stepped out, so that you wouldn’t accidentally bump your head on the roof of the car. The press and media present went wild at this gesture, and you immediately began questioning his intentions behind it. Did he do that out of genuine concern or to put on a show? You skeptically took the arm he offered you, forgetting to smile as you faced the cameras. That was a bad move that would come and bite you in the ass tomorrow, take note one, you thought to yourself—of things to call your friends in the press to fix. Seto might be able to get away with that permanent scowl but the double standard present, especially in the entertainment industry was insane, and so much as motioning to frown would cause controversy. Women always had to smile and appear amiable, it was exhausting.

As Seto led you by the arm, up the stone steps leading to the front door of the Kawaguchi estate, he
Turned to you, his face contorted into a concerned scowl, for the lack of a better way to describe it.

“You feel stiff.” He observed, finally speaking. You drew in a sharp breath.

“You’re imagining things.” You snapped. He didn’t pursue it any further.

“Welcome my lady,” the eldest son and heir to the Kawaguchi family greeted you cheerily, seemingly materializing out of thin air at the door. The man, not much older than you, clad in a stylish white tuxedo, took your hand, politely kissing it. You nodded with a small smile in response. You felt Seto’s grip on your arm tighten, along with his facial expression into an unimpressed glare. “Mr. Kaiba,” the host’s son acknowledged, reaching to shake hands.

After the pleasantries were over, a swarm of women floated over to Seto and you. You wondered if it was more fitting to describe them as a stampede. They were all basically here for Seto, that much was obvious without even having to look at the various shades of light blue gowns they were wearing. You wondered why you hadn’t considered wearing his infamously favourite colour. You could feel insecurity playing at your heartstrings again, feeling as if you had somewhat come short.

As far as beauty goes – and even wealth, status and especially intelligence - , you outranked every woman in the room with ease, that much was certain. You yourself were aware of this fact, but as you watched this flock of women, quite aggressively flirting with Seto, batting their heavily dusted, fake eyelashes seductively, and brushing their hands over his arms, whispering inappropriate things in his ear, you started becoming self-conscious. You started questioning your sex-appeal. You didn’t know how to act flirtatiously; you didn’t know how to act like this. You were just a child, you told yourself; he probably didn’t even see you as a woman.

As a businessman in a grey-green suit walked up to you both, from what it looked like a close business partner of Seto’s and distracted him in conversation, you decided you were no longer needed there. The throng of women still desperately vying for Seto’s attention, you gracefully slipped your arm out of his grip. You’ve been here for five minutes and you’ve already had enough of this. You needed a drink, or several.

You rarely entertained or rather tortured yourself with attending these events and when you did, you always attended alone, so you quietly slipped away from Seto’s company, navigating yourself towards the bar.

Quite a while passed, and Seto didn’t seem to have missed your company. Most of that time you had spent in conversation with people wanting your autograph or a photo with you, rich, young hopefuls who wanted to be scouted by your agency, along with many, many young men – and some considerably old men – who didn’t seem to care that you were taken, shamelessly trying to get your number. Thankfully, there were some competent people at this gathering, every so often indulging you in meaningful conversations about life, business, travel, and so on.

You were speaking to a young businesswoman leading her mother’s interior designing company when the host, Mr. Gorou Kawaguchi interrupted everyone to announce the main fundraising event of the night; the bachelor auction, which basically meant that there would be a line-up of young, rich, eligible bachelors for auction, where the highest bidder wins a date with whichever bachelor she was bidding for, and the money raised goes towards charity, which in this case was a local orphanage.
The auction went on with you hardly paying attention to it, you donated so much money to charity that you had made a name for it in the press, and you had no intention of wasting your time on a date with some air-headed heir. You would donate to some other event they had organized later on in the night. You heard the lady you had been conversing with gasp, pointing as the final and most anticipated ‘bachelor’ to be auctioned for the night ascended up to the podium.

You turned your attention indifferently towards the stage, only to be outraged and incensed by what you saw. Seto was standing there.

You stood there immobilized for a moment, before slowly making your way towards the bidding crowd.

You weren’t sure what you were feeling in that moment. You were filled with rage, confusion and disappointment. Most of all, you felt this consuming sadness as you confirmed your suspicions, Seto really didn’t consider himself to be yours.

The bidding started at a million yen, climbing quite rapidly, about a couple million or so at a time, soon becoming a fierce competition or rather an all-out war between women to win a date with Seto Kaiba no matter what the expense. You knew that he was popular and that things would turn out something like this but you never could have imagined the gong show that was unfolding before you.

Most of the women bidding were self-absorbed heiresses around your age, with a couple of women much older than Seto himself.

You watched in distress as the bid climbed and climbed, unsure of what to do.

“Twenty-million!” declared a woman in a teal dress with fake blonde tinted hair, raising the bid substantially from thirteen-million, causing everyone else to back down.

This was still pocket change.

“Any more offers?” you heard the host call out.

“Sixty-million!” A voice called out. Your jealousy had gotten the better of you. The sea of guests parted to look at the generous bidder. They were all looking at you. It took you a moment to realize that it was your voice that had called out that bid. There were whispers and dirty stares being thrown your way.

You glared up to meet your husband’s deep blue eyes; he was reciprocating the pure venom dripping from your own.

“Sold!” you heard the host declare. You couldn’t help but let your lip curve upwards wryly in a smirk that conveyed a combination of satisfaction and dismay.

You walked up to the front, ignoring the looks you were receiving, writing a cheque for said price.

…

Once the two of you were away from prying eyes, you dragged him forcefully by the wrist to a secluded area in the garden, though honestly you knew you could only manage to because he
actually followed along somewhat willingly. You were standing under a cherry blossom tree in full bloom, which was a rare sight because almost all the blossoms in Domino were destroyed by the storm last week.

You snapped around to face him, eyes continuing to glare dangerously into his deep blue ones, threatening to impale him. He returned this wrathful gaze.

“You’re married! How could you do it?” Your anger had reached a boiling point.

“The host strongly insisted, himself. He was with Akiyama, a gentleman I intend to do business with.” He shot back, distance evident in his voice.

“You didn’t even think to tell me?”

“I couldn’t find you!” he barked

“I’m sure you couldn’t, drowning in that sea of women! But I didn’t in a million years…think you’d be interested in the idea of a date! Have you heard the word bachelor one too many times and forgotten that you were married!???” you screamed, you fury finally boiling over.

“I’m not, and no,” he scoffed, “it was for a cause I strongly supported.” You should have picked up the undertones in his voice, you didn’t.

“What’s the big deal? You and I donate to orphanages all the time!” you dismissed, not quite knowing the gravity of your words.

“I grew up in an orphanage!” he quite literally roared. Oh dear lord, you stopped breathing. You didn’t know. That was an unredeemable mistake in your eyes. For him to openly declare something so personal and what you assumed was incredibly traumatic, you knew you had gone too far. You had struck a very deep nerve. Too deep. You had dug too far in the wrong direction. You deemed what you had done so unforgivable that you couldn’t even bring yourself to look at him, let alone apologize. You felt your heart drop to your stomach. You stumbled a step back. “You’re going to come off as jealous and desperate,” he continued after a while in a low tone. You were surprised at how quickly he had seemingly recovered from that.

You couldn’t stop yourself after hearing that accusation.

“Is that how I seem to you?” your voice was so quiet and thin, it threatened to crack.

“No, I don’t. I meant the guests, and the media tomorrow, it’s not going to look good,” he explained in a tone a little less distressed than moments ago.

“…But you’re thinking it.” You accused.

“You’re insufferable!” he snarled, throwing his head back in frustration. “Could you stop acting like a child for a moment and think!”

“I’ll take care of the media! Don’t you worry your pretty little head about that!” you spat back.

“I’m sure you will!” he sneered, stalking off.

You wanted to cry and scream. If you were worried about losing Seto Kaiba earlier, you’ve definitely gone and done it now. If he didn’t find you repulsive before, he definitely wanted nothing to do with you now. In fact, you wouldn’t be surprised if he woke you up tomorrow by throwing divorce papers at you.
You so desperately wanted to break down but you didn’t have time for that right now. Holding your composure during situations of immense pressure like was what you were raised to do. You immediately dialled Renji’s number.

“Renji, it’s me, do you have a man on the ground here at the Kawaguchi charity fundraiser gala?” You heard him scoff.

“We own one of the largest media conglomerates in the country; of course we have someone down there.”

“Well, I did a thing.” You said vaguely.

“What did you do?” he asked accusingly, “You couldn’t possibly have bid for your own boyfriend at the bachelor auction right? As long as it’s not something like that, I’m sure it’s nothing we can’t handle.”

You stayed silent for a few moments, unsure of what to say, wondering how he already knew, though the sarcastic tone in his voice suggested that he was only mocking you. “You didn’t!” he exclaimed after a few moments. “You did that? How much did you –”

“Sixty-million” you said cutting him off.

“Six—sixty? Sixty million yen? Are you insane!?” You waited for him to calm down from his yelling.

“Yeah…make me look like I’m lovable and smitten and bidding for a good cause instead of crazy and obsessive?”

“I can’t believe you…Yeah, alright. I’ll take care of it for you.” He declared grudgingly after a few moments of thought. “Consider it done. You owe me for this one, big time!”

“What do you want Renji?” You asked him frankly.

“A kiss?”

“Oh get out of here!” you scolded him jokingly as you hung up on him, ready to call others. It would be much faster and much more efficient to take care of this matter yourself than leaving it to your assistants.

As you finished getting off the phone with a third media heavyweight regarding headlines tomorrow, you heard someone calling your name.

You whipped your head around to see a group of young men approaching you. You didn’t know any of them, but from how they looked, they were probably the sons of some of the business execs that were attending the gala. Their clothing looked to be expensive but was in poor taste, in varying garish shades and gaudy fabrics, with their hair unfortunately gelled back with way too much product. They seemed rambunctious and quite out of control. Some of them had their hands around the shoulders of others, appearing to be drunk to varying degrees and they all smelled like trouble.

There was something off about the one that had addressed you earlier, something in his expression, and all of them really, you just couldn’t place it.

They approached you with grins that held certain wickedness to them, cat-calling you and trying to touch and grab you while asking you inappropriate questions like what colour your underwear was. The one that had initially called you just stood by in the center of the group and watched, a smirk playing on his lips as he twirled a cigar in his hands.
You were very adept in dealing with men like this, the trick was to be firm but polite – you wouldn’t know where a camera could be hiding. Usually, all they wanted was a signature or a picture or something like that and were harmless. Every so often like right now, security would need to be called so you tried to not stray too far from the crowd. Right now, you were much too far from anything or anyone else to hear if you were forced to call for help, so you instinctively backed away, debating whether or not you should reach for your heel to defend yourself.

As you backed away cautiously, you felt something warm and soft – a tuxedo jacket – being draped around your shoulders as two hands clutched your shoulders, holding you in place. Your heart skipped a beat, afraid to look around to see who it was.

“Yohshimura.” You heard Seto’s voice from behind you. The name was said with a form of acknowledgment and yet laced with menace and disgust. You looked up to see his blue eyes glaring piercingly at the man with the cigar. He tightened his grip around your shoulders protectively. As the old saying goes, if looks could kill, that man would drop dead where he stood.

“Kaiba.” The man named Yoshimura responded in greeting.

To be completely honest, you were relieved to see Seto there but you would die before you admitted that you couldn’t fight your own battles.

“We’re leaving,” he declared gruffly, drawing you closer to his body, pulling you along with him by your shoulders. “Don’t involve yourself with those men. There’re not people you can handle,” he advised as he led you to the car.

“And what kind of men is it that I can’t handle?” you inquired narrowing your eyes, offended by his belittling comment of your ability to handle people.

“They’re dangerous, don’t argue with me and just stay away from them.” You weren’t having it with this vague yet authoritarian bullshit.

“You don’t seem to know the kind of men I deal with.” You argued getting into the car as he opened the door.

“While I highly doubt that, just do as I tell you, it’s for your own safety,” he said as he got into the driver’s seat.

“I don’t need you to fight my battles Kaiba; I’ve taken care of myself just fine these past twenty-one years before you waltzed in.”

He didn’t respond to that comment as he gritted his teeth, and while in your state of vexation you argued, you felt that after that orphanage comment earlier, you didn’t have the right to yell back at him tonight and for quite a while after.

An uncomfortable silence endured all the way back to the mansion, with neither of you willing to betray their pride to apologize first, though your conscience kept eating away at you as it reminded you that it was you who had gone too far.

…

You walked into the bedroom with Seto following behind you. With each step you took, your body
stiff with tension, you could practically feel the strain between the two of you pulling at every muscle of your being. The air felt thick, so thick that it was hard to move. You felt the distance, the hostility. You felt you were losing him.

You slipped his jacket off your shoulders, drawing in a deep breath to steady yourself, feeling the heaviness of the anxiety lifting up in your chest with your motion. Bailing your hands into fists and clenching your jaw, you turned sharply on your heel, briskly walking up to Seto. Your expression contorting with visible nervousness as you placed your hands on his face, tilting your head upwards, while slightly lifting yourself on your toes, forcefully pressing your lips against his. You closed your eyes tightly, hands snaking up his chest to his shoulders. He stiffened at your touch, momentarily hesitating as he tried to grasp the situation. You feared he would push you away, but then he lowered his head as he returned your kiss. His hands found your hips and yours reached up to grab his hair.

“I’m so sorry,” you whispered as you pulled away for a moment breathless, your eyes on his lips. You were breathing rapidly, your chest, tightly wound and slightly lifted by your dress and lingerie underneath, was more prominent as it rose and fell. His gaze travelled down from your lips to your still concealed but accentuated breasts. When you met his lips again, he responded ravenously, pushing his lips against yours with a force you could not match, his right hand on the back of your head, holding you in place. He roughly bit down on your bottom lip; you parting your lips to allow him entrance to explore you.

Each time you pulled away for air, you couldn’t help repeating ‘I’m sorry.’

You stumbled back slightly, overwhelmed by his weight leaning on you. You guided his hands towards the back to your zipper, and he complied by unfastening it, allowing your dress to fall freely to the floor.

His hands snaked down your back, grazing your bare skin, past your hips, sliding underneath the lace of your underwear to grab your bare ass, groping it as he continued to dominantly press his lips against yours, kissing you hungrily.

Still in your heels, you stepped out of the dress pooled around your feet, as Seto pushed you on to the bed. He leaned over you on his knees, one knee placed between your legs. He took a few moments to inspect your form. You breathing continued to intensify with anticipation, your chest continuing to rise and fall.

Wordlessly, he captured your lips into a kiss again, the hand that was not supporting his weight, roaming your body. His lips left yours as he trailed them teasingly down the side of your neck to your protruding collarbone, where he harshly began biting and nipping, causing you to whimper under his touch. Your hands undid his bow along with a few buttons before finding their way back around his neck, as you pulled him closer.

His hand reached up, pushing your bra up and away from your breasts. His blue eyes forcibly holding your gaze as he did it. He fondled them and ran his thumb across your nipple, causing you to slightly arch your back in pleasure as you felt your chest tightening. He lowered himself, putting his mouth over one breast, sucking on it while he ran his tongue over your nipple again and again, occasionally nipping at it, making you throw back your head and moan over and over, while his hand continued to roughly grope other. You desperately gasped for air, moaning incoherently, as you tightening your grip around his neck and hair.

Then suddenly, you felt him reaching his hand over to loosen your grip around his neck, as he pulled up from you slightly. You could still feel his breath on your face.

“Open your eyes.” he commanded huskily, slightly panting. It was at that moment you realized that
for the greater part of this, you’ve had your eyes squeezed tightly shut. You complied. He sighed as he hung his head. “I understand this… must be difficult for you being as young as you are, but you don’t need to throw your body at me for me to keep you.” You looked at him bewildered, trying to wrap your still spinning head around his sudden words. “You don’t really want me like this.”

“No,” you breathed, “I do want you,” you insisted softly but desperately.

“No you don’t. You’re doing this for all the wrong reasons. You don’t need to force yourself to give up your virginity to me and how-ever many times after to keep me!” he shouted back, cutting you off, his voice rough and on edge.

You felt rejected. Still in your lying position, you were overcome with so much rage that you might as well have erupted into flames, much to your own surprise and also visibly catching him off guard. You started asking yourself if you had even wanted this, or had you forced yourself to in order to please Seto? You hadn’t really considered your motives before he pointed it out, but you felt so unwanted in that moment that you couldn’t control yourself. You weren’t good enough for him. You were considered the most beautiful woman in the country but you would still never be good enough for him.

“No!” you screamed defiantly, “I do want you! It’s you that won’t even look at me! It’s you that doesn’t want me! Don’t fool me like you want me, then toss me aside,” you started thrashing about violently, trying to free yourself. Seto caught your punches, holding you down, forcefully pulling you up to a sitting position. He unhooked your partially removed bra and discarded it completely before wrapping his hands around you, forcing you into an embrace on his lap. You continued struggling, your folded arms hitting his chest.

“Listen to me!” He demanded, attempting to settle you. “I could barely stop myself.” He spoke those last words dangerously in your ears in almost a whisper. You felt him reach down and removing your heels. “I don’t believe that there’s one man in this entire world who could resist you, especially like this. I want you, so don’t tempt me,” he growled, “but right now you’re trying to give me what I want, not what you want.”

You let his words soak through, slowly falling into his chest, just breathing in his scent.

“I said something unforgivable to you today.” You spoke softly after a while, leaning against his chest. “How are you still holding me?”

“You didn’t know,” he dismissed.

“That doesn’t change anything.”

“Don’t let it bother you more than it bothers me.”

“I’m sorry,” you said again.

“I think you’ve said that enough already.”

“I’m sorry; I can’t tell you that I know what it’s like, because I don’t, but I want to tell you, it may not be my place, but I want to tell you, I know what desperation feels like, desperation to escape, fear, I know what it means to be hopeless.” You let your words sit for a while before speaking again, “It doesn’t take away from what I said to you today, but I thought you should know.”

“It is your place.”
As you fell asleep, you felt someone’s gaze on you, speaking words to you that you couldn’t quite understand.

“If only you knew why I did what I did to marry you. I’ve wanted to tell you, your face could launch a thousand ships…”

Chapter End Notes

I’ve always fancied Seto to be quite sentimental and dramatic when he wants to be, and I hope that last quote conveyed just that.
I feel like at this point, I can never write a chapter under 5000 words.

Also, to anyone that was confused by the ending quote or chapter title of last chapter, it was a reference to Helen of Troy. The actual reference was not only alluding the beauty of Helen but also the Trojan Wars itself, if anyone is interested in a hint.

Anyway, enjoy!

The next morning, you were woken up by the obnoxious ringing of a phone. It could have been vibrating, you couldn’t really tell. You instinctively reached over, slightly climbing over the barricade you assumed was an awkwardly placed body pillow and resisting the pull of what in your hazy mind were tangled sheets, as you picked up the phone.

“Hello?” you answered groggily, eyes still closed.

“Mr. Kaiba, sir, there’s been a slight… setback with the virtual reality helmets.” Wait, what? You opened your eyes; the room was still fairly dark.

“I’m sorry, virtual what?”

You felt the phone being stripped out of your hands.

“Kaiba.” He answered. He sounded unimpressed and downright annoyed.

It took your brain a few moments to fully grasp the situation. That wasn’t your phone, probably wasn’t even the same ringtone, you weren’t in your penthouse, the supposed body pillow you were straddling or rather lying on was actually Seto’s – shirtless – body and the sheets you thought you were being tied down by were actually his arms holding you down. He still had one arm around you while he answered the phone.

You could feel your organs shrivelling up, both at your blunder of having publicly exposed Seto’s personal life to his employees and the way your body was oriented in that moment.

To say that you were mortified would an understatement. You were so horrified that you forgot to get off him in your state of traumatization. Your head fell on his chest as you lay stiffly, unmoving, only breathing when it was absolutely necessary as he finished speaking to, or rather screaming at and terrorizing whomever. He was telling the man on the other end something along the lines of how if he was in capable of managing at least that much, he shouldn’t be working at Kaiba Corp. except the way he worded it was plain cruel.

“I was trying to answer that without waking you.” He spoke gruffly, his morning voice still not failing to send a wave of shivers down your body. “That was the head of my research and development team. He doesn’t know we’re married. He probably thinks we’re sleeping together, since he thinks I’m dating you.” He sounded mildly annoyed so you wondered perhaps if you had imagined that undertone of amusement. You felt his other arm landing on your back, stiffening you even more.
You tried to slowly climb off of him but his arms held you firmly in place. He was a lot warmer than you had expected him to be.

“About what you said last night,” he said abruptly, and you could feel your blood flowing backwards again at those words. You knew exactly what he was referring to and you had no intention of elaborating it any further than you did. It was something unnecessary you had said about your past when emotions were running high in hopes of repairing the crack you had caused in your relationship. “What did you mean?”

“It’s just as I said,” you replied as vaguely as you possibly could.

“There’s something you’re not telling me.”

“I suppose that’s something we share in common,” you shot back.

“I…hope to offer you better clarity in the future,” he said somewhat hesitantly.

You slowly freed yourself from his grasp, pulling yourself up, bringing your knees to your chest, hugging them. You realized you were wearing one of his shirts again.

You needed to better evaluate your relationship with Seto.

You knew you didn't feel deeply enough for him to consider it love. You asked yourself if you were physically attracted to him or if you acted the way you had because you subconsciously felt the obligation to feel those things given the premise of your relationship. You figured that while you were somewhat attracted to him, it was most likely the latter. You felt that you needed to love your husband, be jealous when his attention strayed, because though you may have not considered it, you've always wanted to marry the person you loved, and when it was no longer possible to achieve that, you sought to artificially produce those passions. You came to the conclusion that though you may not have realized it, to a great extent, everything you felt, was a product of your own imagination. In reality, you haven't known him long enough to grow any genuine physical or emotional attachment.

This epiphany of sorts afforded the same feeling as placing your feet on dry land after emerging from a whirlpool, or stepping off a roller coaster.

You could feel your rationality return and your thoughts clear up.

You could see straight after a long spell of obscured vision.

"I think I tried to build ten years’ worth of history and chemistry and fit it into the span of ten days, and in doing so I've put you in an awkward and difficult position. It was unbecoming of me. I'm sorry."

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither were relationships. This was going to take the two of you the same amount of time to accept and come to terms with as it would take any other normal couple.

And if at the end of that time, you found yourselves incompatible, at least you wouldn't fall apart, as you hadn't fallen together in the first place for those reasons.

"You're talking as if we are strangers again."
"Aren't we?"

You shared a bed, but that’s about all you shared.

You began questioning what you really knew about the man, you knew nothing of his family, nothing about his childhood and hardly anything about the work he did. You didn’t even know his likes and dislikes.

"I thought we had progressed past that."

"I'm not so sure we have."

"I disagree," he persisted. He spoke again after a few more moments of consideration. "Is that what you want us to be?"

"I don't know," you admitted looking down.

He lay there for a few more moments before wordlessly leaving the bed and walking into the bathroom.

...

“Is Mr. Kaiba in his office?” you asked the secretary sitting outside. You hadn’t meant to visit unannounced but it wasn’t exactly something that you had planned for yourself either. It was mid-morning and you’d found some time between your own schedules to drop by. After that incredibly uncomfortable conversation earlier that morning, you had questioned if you should come, but figured that some common decency would go a long way.

“Yes, but he’s currently holding an interview,’ the lady behind the desk politely replied.

“I’ll wait here then.”

“Should I let him know you’re here?”

“No, that’s not necessary.” She simply responded with a smile and a nod.

About ten or so minutes later, the door opened and from the office emerged a woman with wavy bleach blonde hair, a white blouse so low cut –or rather unbuttoned – that it was borderline inappropriate and a light blue blazer with coordinated pencil skirt and stilettos.

You stood up, and walking up to the door was debating whether or not to greet her when she dismissively flipped her hair over her shoulder quite dramatically and walked past you to the secretary’s desk.

You weren’t entirely sure if she hadn’t recognized you or if she didn’t care, but the way she carried herself was so superfluous that as you held the door open to Seto’s office, you couldn’t help but laugh.

“Is something funny?” you heard her snap. You didn’t think she had heard. You would have been offended, but this was the most amusing thing to happen to you all day.

“No, no, I’m sorry,” you responded, desperately trying to stifle a giggle. She made an ‘hmph,’ sound as she turned back to her paperwork. You assumed she had gotten whatever the position was
that she was interviewed for.

As you let yourself into the office, you saw your husband intently focused on his computer screen, furiously typing away.

“What is it?” he barked at the sound of your heels against the carpet, without looking away.

He looked up with an irritated expression when he didn’t receive a response. If you were to be quite honest, you weren’t entirely sure how to go about answering that question.
“I told you not to interrupt—I wasn’t expecting you,” he addressed you, descending to a softer tone, his expression relaxing slightly.

“Yes, sorry for showing up unannounced. Who is she?” you asked as you sauntered over to his desk, motioning towards the door.

“Sasaki? She’ll be one of my personal secretaries.”

“I hope she’s on probation.”

“She’s a temp. Why?” He seemed confused. He leaned forward, propping his elbows on his desk, fingers lace together, waiting for you to reply.

“No reason,” you said trying not to laugh again. You could be petty but not enough to mess with your husband’s internal hiring petty. For now, you were just amused by her attitude. You wouldn’t be cruel until she stepped on your toes, and as far as you were concerned, failing to recognize you was not a crime. You read people well. In your line of work, you had to, and something told you that she would do something before long that would make Seto fire her himself, so you would just sit and wait.

“Should I be concerned?” He inquired, raising an eyebrow, likely referring to the way you were biting down on your lip to prevent your grin from spreading any wider.

“No.” You dismissed as you sat down in front of his desk. “I got you something—a wedding present of sorts,” you said hesitantly, placing a dark blue box with a silver ribbon wrapped around it on his desk. He looked up at you with a hint of surprise in his eyes, though it vanished as soon as it had appeared. He reached out one hand to pick it up.

You waited with baited breath as he unwrapped the packaging.

“You got me a Rolex?” You felt disappointment washing over you; he didn’t seem too thrilled about it, then again Seto Kaiba was rarely thrilled about anything, if ever.

It was a silver watch with a light blue face and three smaller crystal dials carved into it. When you bought it, you were quite confident he would like it, given the colour scheme.
“Is it too analog?” you asked scrunching your nose. You knew you should have bought him another private jet or an island or something to that effect.

“No, it’s… nice.” He seemed lost in thought as he tilted the opened box back and forth, inspecting it.

“No, it’s… nice.” He seemed lost in thought as he tilted the opened box back and forth, inspecting it.

“You don’t like it.” It was a statement.

“No, I do. Thank you,” he said, plucking the watch out of the casing, undoing the clasp and putting it on his wrist, fastening it, as if to make the point. You couldn’t help but smile that he had at least put it on in front of you. He did say he liked it, and he was the type of man to brutally shoot something down if he wasn’t a fan of it, regardless of how that would affect the other person. He
continued to inspect it for a few more moments before his blue eyes shifted their focus on to you. They looked to be calculating something or rather studying you intently as he continued looking at you but you could hardly guess what he was thinking.

“Well, so long as you like it.” You said awkwardly under his intense gaze. You stood up to take your leave when you were overcome with a paroxysm of coughing. You grabbed on to the edge of his desk with one hand, shaken by how violent it was, while clasping the other hand over your mouth.

Seto shot up from his chair, leaning over the desk as he grabbed a hold of your shoulder to steady you.

Your coughing continued until you felt a burning sensation tearing through your throat. You coughed again, but partially gagged, feeling this warmth filling your mouth with the taste of iron. You tried to supress it but the urge returned more aggressively than before, and as you submitted to the compulsion you felt the sensation of something leaking out. You looked down at the hand that had been covering your mouth apprehensively, suspecting what it might be, to see dark scarlet dripping through your fingers.

Your eyes widened in shock, but before you could fully comprehend it, you were overcome with another wave of coughing and more blood continued to come out.

You registered Seto letting go of you for a moment before swinging around his desk to hold up your shoulders from behind you. He reached out for a tissue and held it up to your mouth to stop the blood from smearing everywhere.

“What –” you tried asking but that worsened the burning sensation in your lungs.

“Don’t talk,” Seto ordered as he pushed you to lean against him, passing the tissue to his right hand, which was wrapped around your shoulders, while with the left, he leaned across and pressed a button on the switchboard of his phone. “Get in here!” he yelled at who you assumed was his secretary.

As you continued your violent coughing, the blood now having completely soaked through the tissue, staining Seto’s white suit and spilling down your neck, you heard the door swing open and footsteps approaching you.

You saw his secretary gasp in horror as she saw you, followed by a high pitched shriek from the blonde woman you had seen earlier, Sasaki, who you had failed to notice was standing behind the secretary. You managed to roll your eyes in the midst of your coughing.

“Cancel all my appointments for the day.” You heard Kaiba say, his voice strained.

“It’s fine – ” you tried to protest.

“Stop talking!” he barked at you.

“But sir, the overseas product launch meeting with the foreign retailers this afternoon,” you heard the secretary interrupt.

“Reschedule it! Or have Mokuba attend it. He can make it back from Tokyo within an hour.” You heard him yell back.

“No, you go,” you croaked, “I need to get back to work anyway,” you tried objecting again as the coughing began to subside.
“Have you lost your mind? That’s probably the kind of thinking that got you here. We are going to the hospital, now!”

Seto supported your weight as he dragged you to the private elevator in the corner of his office. From the corner of your eye, you caught the new secretary stare at you two in shock as realization of who you were probably dawned on her.

…

On your way to the hospital, you were convinced that you were going to die from Seto driving like a maniac rather than whatever it was that was causing you to throw up blood. Quite literally, traffic laws were more like suggestions to him, suggestions which he chose to ignore most of the time.

…

Seto Kaiba storming into your hospital, covered in blood, looking murderous was never a good thing. It could mean a many number of things, the first and the most likely possibility being that he had finally killed somebody. His mere presence elicited reactions ranging from unsettling to petrifying in general. So when he marched in with you all bloody to the hospital nearest to Kaiba Corp., the hospital staff immediately went into overdrive.

They ran multiple tests on you and gave you some sickening, thick liquid to drink, that was apparently an antacid.

By mid-afternoon, the results had come back and they concluded that you’d had a severe acid reflux caused by gastritis where the acid from your stomach had “refluxed” back into your esophagus, causing severe irritation, inflammation and eventually internal bleeding in the lining. They asked you if you experienced heart burn often, to which you replied yes. They informed that it hadn’t progressed far enough to require surgery but you would need to start paying better attention to taking your meals and reduce your stress levels in order to prevent it from progressing further into something similar to an ulcer, which could again rupture. Neither of which you could be sure you were able to do.

“Mr. Kaiba,” drawled the rather old gastroenterologist, “I strongly advise that you closely monitor what this young lady eats and when she eats it. It appears that a prolonged habit of skipping meals, lack of sleep and heightened stress brought on this episode of acid reflux. I will prescribe some medication to alleviate the pain and repair the lining. Stay away from alcohol, extremely spicy, sour or fatty food. The recovery will be slow and will require a lot of attention and patience.”

‘Just peachy,’ you thought.

You thanked him for his time and left.

On your way home, Seto made a brief stop at a pharmacy to pick up your prescribed medication.

As he got back into the car, you tried to read his face for any signs of irritation or annoyance you were sure he must be feeling, but failed; his face was expressionless as ever. You tried to word your next sentence carefully.
“It seems I have much to be apologetic about to you these days. I’ve imposed on you a great deal, I’m sorry, and thank you for doing all this; you didn’t have to go out of your way like this.”

“Are you going to keep acting like this?” You couldn’t understand the irritation behind his words.

“I’m sorry?” you honestly didn’t know what he was talking about.

“You keep – never mind,” he let out a frustrated sigh, massaging he forehead with his fingers as he continued to stare ahead.

…

You had instructed your personal assistant to shift your schedule around for the day while you were still at the hospital so when you got to the mansion, you took your medication, ate the most bland porridge you’ve ever had the misfortune to eat –courtesy of the mansion’s nutritionist – and went to sleep.

You had expected Seto to go back to the office but instead he retreated to his study to get some work done.

You woke up to the rhythmic sound of uninterrupted typing. You’ve never realized how therapeutic the sound of fingers hitting the keys in a certain continuing pattern could be. The room was dark with only the two bedside lamps lit, and the drawn curtains let you know that it was night time. You shifted your head to see Seto sitting to your left on the bed, typing what you assumed was some sort of programming code.

“You took almost an entire day off of work because of me. I didn’t think you would, thank you. I’m also really sorry.” You paused to mull over your next words. “I won’t be such a burden to you going forward, Mr. Kaiba.” You hadn’t realized what you had called him.

He looked down at you, and a few moments later closed his laptop, sighing.

“You’re pushing me away.”

“What?” Where did that come from?

“Since this morning, don’t think I haven’t noticed. You’re back calling me by my last name again. What is it now?”

You had nothing to say to that, perhaps you were. You closed your eyes and took a deep breath.

Before you could respond, the resounding echo of porcelain shattering came from what sounded like the floor below. You shot up instinctively, looking in the direction the noise had come from. The security alarm went off alerting you of a potential break in moments later. There was no way a petty thief could get through all that security.

Seto jumped out of bed and reached under the pillow he had been leaning on and drew out a handgun – a real freaking gun. He didn’t even load it, just turned the safety off. You don’t know what bothered you more, the fact that you had been sleeping with a fully loaded pistol next to your head all this time without knowing, or the fact that your husband didn’t bother sharing this information. Either way, it certainly wasn’t the actual presence of the gun itself that unsettled you.
You looked at him incredulous. You knew how to shoot a gun and sure you had plenty of enemies but you had never felt the need to keep one under your pillow.

“How long has that been there?”

“How long has that been there?” he replied in a matter-of-fact tone.

What? You were starting to grow fearful of this man. You began wondering what the hell else he had under his sleeve.

His cell phone rang and he picked up to his security advising him of the break in.

“I already know that you fools, question is how the hell did they get in?” He snarled, running around the bed towards the door.

It made more sense to you to stay in the room instead of roaming through the maze of hallways outside, waiting for whoever it is to find you, but if Seto was going to be out there doing just that, it was probably safer to not be in here by yourself like a sitting duck, with no weapon.

“Wait! I’m coming with you!” you called out.

“Out of the question, you’re staying here!”

“Wouldn’t it be safer for me to be with you rather than by myself with no security?” You were really hoping he would buy this.

“Fine, but stay close.”

…

You were following closely behind Seto through the labyrinth of halls, as quietly as possible, when the lights went out. The emergency generators didn’t come to life. You were now completely in the dark. You were standing quite close to him so it wasn’t entirely petrifying being shrouded in complete nothingness, but the longer you spent in the dark, the more this whole idea was starting to feel like a really stupid one.

You thought you had heard a noise behind you and you briefly turned out of reflex to inspect it, and when you turned back, Seto was nowhere to be seen. There were four different directions he could have gone down but he was so light on his feet and much faster than you, that you couldn’t begin to guess which way that could possibly be. Abandoned in the dark, you could feel the blood in your veins freeze over as the familiar sensation of terror began consuming you. Calling out for Seto would only alert the intruder of your whereabouts and put both of you at risk.

You knew two routes through this mansion, one that led from the front door to the dining room and the other that led from the garage to the bedroom. Beyond that, the Grand Canyon could exist for all you cared. Around this time of night, there were considerably fewer maids on shift as well.

You stood there for a moment longer before pure survival instincts kicked in. There was an intruder, quite possibly armed and dangerous, roaming the halls of the mansion. The first tangible thought that occurred to you was that you needed to get to somewhere less open from all sides and
hopefully find a weapon on the way there.

You took off towards the stairs behind you, feeling your way around with your hands and praying not to trip over anything. You reached a landing and following a hallway lined with paintings you reached what roughly looked to be the dining area of the kitchen.

‘Perfect,’ you thought. The kitchen was where the knives were, which then again could also be used against you so you needed to get to them first. You placed your palm on the marble countertop and trailed it along the surface trying to find the utensils.

After a few more minutes of clumsily feeling around, your hand brushed over what you knew was the knife holder. Bingo. You wrapped your palm around one and pulled it out of its wooden sheath. As you lowered it to your side, while you considered whether you should pick up a few more, you felt an arm wrap around you and a cloth with a pungent stench being placed over your mouth and nose. Chloroform. You immediately stopped breathing.

“You’ll have to come with us,” a gravelly voice told you from behind. You swallowed hard, from how it felt, he was much taller and burlier than you, and unlike Seto who you’ve heard has mastered several forms of martial arts, knew absolutely no form of self-defence, at least as far as hand to hand combat went, but you weren’t about to go anywhere.

You slowly lifted the hand that was clutching the knife and jabbed it backwards at his gut, pulling it out just as quickly and then plunging it back in. He let out a sharp cry as the blade made contact with his flesh and stumbled backwards a few steps, clutching his stomach. You tightened your fingers around the hilt as you jumped back. The fumes from the chloroform had reached your sinuses at this point and you were starting to feel faint, and if you could see, you knew you would have double vision. You shook your head in an attempt to regain some control over your senses.

In the obscurity of the darkness, you heard the man come charging at you. You heard the clicking of what you thought was the safety mechanism of a gun being flipped off. You acted proactively before the man could shoot at you, leaping forward as you swung your knife blindly in front of you; it connected with the man’s face. He let out another groan, along with a string of profanities, cursing you.

You heard the approaching footsteps of the security in the distance echoing through the empty halls, likely made aware of your location by the screams of pain let out by the intruder, or rather who you knew now was a kidnapper.

The man spun around to leave through the entrance you had entered the dining area through and you threw the knife in your hand in his general direction, relying solely on your sense of hearing. You heard him hiss but from what it sounded like the knife connected with, it was more likely wood. It must have just grazed him. You heard a gunshot, followed by what used to look like a decanter next to you suddenly exploding, hurling fragments of crystal and glass into the air around you. You instinctively ducked for cover for a moment before recovering.

If he thought he was going to escape after pulling that on you, he had another thing coming. He would die by your hands before your husband’s guards ever found him. Pure adrenaline was coursing through your veins now.

You lunged forward towards the knives in the holder, taking as many of them out as you could possibly feel in the dark and placing four in each hand between your fingers. If there was one skill that would help you in this situation was that you were an excellent marksman; archery, shooting, using projectile weapons, you never missed, except for that one time just now. It had started off as a pastime which had quickly evolved into a skill that you were unexpectedly good at.
Once you had a good grip of the knives, you took off after the kidnapper. The chloroform was still affecting your balance, causing you to sway to the side every few steps, and the absolute darkness, only alleviated every few meters by dim moonlight filtering through the windows, was harder to navigate through with knives weighing down both your hands.

As he ran, hand still clutching the stab wounds on his stomach, the intruder turned and shot at you a couple of times, each time missing you by a few inches as you dodged.

On the plus side, the moonlight gave you somewhat of a better view of the trespasser ahead of you, and once you were in range, you lifted your right hand behind you, while holding the other one out front for balance and swung the right hand forward, launching the blades at your target. Despite your light-headed state, all four knives made impact with the intruder’s back.

He howled in pain as he collapsed to the ground, just meters ahead of you. You walked up to him, inspecting the locations the knives had stabbed the man, and ensuring he wasn’t dead; you released the gun from his grip, disarming him. You walked around, flipping the man clad entirely in black by his collar on to his side.

“Who sent you?” you demanded dangerously, kneeling down next to him, slapping him harshly across the cheek in an attempt to bring him back to consciousness. It was useless, he was too far gone.

You were consumed by wrath. How dare this filth come inside your home, throw you into darkness, drug you and attempt to not only kidnap but also murder you?

The lights turned back on around you but you didn’t notice. In a fit of rage, you started punching the man within an inch of his life. In your state of senseless outrage, you hadn’t heard the footsteps approaching you, until you were forcefully pulled away from the unconscious figure by an arm wrapping around you above your chest.

By the time you were pulled into a standing position, your shoulders were heaving as you panted. Seto’s security gathered around the unconscious man and began to apprehend him. The guards looked down at how the man was impaled, then his bruised and bloodied face, and back up at you and the knives that still hung from your fingers, certain horror written across their faces.

“Are you alright?” Seto’s voice fell on your ears in a rough, almost strained whisper, his grip tightening around you. He brought his other arm up to wrap around your waist.

“Of course I am. I didn’t get to where I am sitting pretty.”
I think I jinxed myself yesterday when I said I couldn't write a chapter under 5000 words. Well here it is. This one's about 2000 words short. I thought this was a good point to break it off, just because if I had carried on, it would have felt like it was dragging on.

Not that anyone has asked, but I do plan to involve Mokuba at some point in the story but just not sure when.

He tightened his embrace.

“I heard gunshots,” he said. You could feel the weight of his head resting on yours. You felt him draw in a deep breath as if to steady himself, but it was done so discreetly you wondered if you had imagined it. He turned you around to face him; he raised his right hand still holding the gun, up from your waist and placed it on the back of your head, pressing your face against his broad chest. You were careful not to accidentally cut him with the knives in your hand as he spun you. “I thought I lost you,” his voice was rougher and just slightly carried an uneven edge.

“I’m standing right here,” you replied unfeelingly. You weren’t scared, or traumatized. You had exerted so much emotion just now that you no longer could bring yourself to feel anything.

You didn’t know that your white nightgown was stained red and you couldn’t tell that your bare arms had crystal dug into your skin.

“Sir, it looks like Akiyama, the one we discharged from the security team a few months ago,” one of the guards informed Seto.

It was an inside job.

“Are you certain?” Seto barked back.

That’s how he knew his way in and around.

“Sir, it’s hard to say for sure, his face is disfigured quite badly.”

That’s how he knew to cut the power without triggering the back-up generators.

“Is there anything you worthless scum can actually do?” Seto snarled. “My girlfriend took care of the intruder before any of you incompetent fools even found him! You put the life of a Kaiba at risk! Do you realize the gravity of that? If something had happened to her, I would have taken great pleasure in tearing all of you limb from limb. Is that understood?” You’ve never seen him so angry. You could feel the walls shaking as his voice resounded through the empty halls of the mansion. Even you stood still for a moment, holding your breath.

His security team fell to their knees, begging for forgiveness. They didn’t receive any.
Your mind repeated his words over again. He had called you a Kaiba. Even though he had referred to you as his girlfriend, he had still called you a Kaiba. You felt a certain warmth rekindling in your chest. For a long time, you hadn’t had anyone to worry for you like that; at least, you hoped his emotions were genuine. You wondered if perhaps someday, you could begin to call him your family.

Then you thought back to what the intruder had said, he had said you had to go with him. Was he here for you specifically or was he trying to grab you because you happened to be present in that moment? Was this a part of a grander scheme or was this an isolated incident for something like a ransom demand? You couldn’t be sure, but you thought it better not to tell your husband for now. It would be easier to take care of it yourself.

…

The police arrived very discreetly later that night so as to not alert the press, and the assailant was taken into custody. You gave them your statement, and it was written down as self-defence. You knew very well that there was excessive use of force involved in your attempt at self-defence, but the police didn’t seem to question it. If things escalated, you would speak to the chief of police.

…

“I couldn’t protect you,” Seto spoke in a voice so low it was barely more audible than a whisper. You wondered if he had even meant for you to hear that. You were back in your room, sitting on your bed, while Seto was kneeling on the floor beside you, tending to your wounds. You had three pieces of crystal wedged into the skin of your upper right arm, and another laceration below that where another piece had sliced through. The cuts thankfully weren’t very deep and would heal quickly, hopefully without scarring.

“You didn’t need to,” you reassured him.

“I underestimated you.”

“Did you?”

He didn’t reply to that.

“Where did you learn how to throw like that,” he inquired. You winced as he removed the last piece of crystal from your skin. His deep blue eyes darted up to meet yours in the dimly lit room at that. Blue eyes intently searching your own for pain.

“It’s all I did sitting in the dark all those years. Throw darts at a picture of my step-mother. Eventually I took up archery and shooting as a hobby.”

It wasn’t actually darts that you threw, they were throwing stars. When your politician father came on an extended business trip to Japan, bringing you and your step-mother with him, you had found those stars under some floor boards in the room of the traditionally inspired Japanese villa you had stayed, or rather was locked in.
It was the only thing you could call your own. It was your only true belonging. It gave you identity and strength in those times of obscurity and uncertainty.

It was the only thing you took away with you when you left.

“In the dark?” He pressed on.

“Yes, in the dark.”

“What are you not telling me?” He demanded huskily.

“A great number of things, I suppose. Much like yourself.”

…

You changed out of your stained night gown into another before slipping into bed. You felt Seto’s arm wrap around you. You hadn’t asked him to. You didn’t reject him. You felt his face press up against the back of your neck. He pulled you close and held you so tight that you wondered if he thought you would disappear if he let go.

…

When you woke up the next morning around six, Seto was gone. That was a first. You hadn’t even felt him leaving.

On your way to work, you called Renji and your other contacts in the media that had helped prevent a potential media catastrophe. The articles about the charity gala painted you to be a generous patroness and philanthropist rather than an overly attached girlfriend, though the positive feedback the articles garnered also helped to solidify the authenticity of your relationship in the public eye. The fact that hardly any articles seemed to criticize you soon tipped you off to the fact that your husband also probably had a hand in damage control. Sure you covered a lot of ground, but as powerful as you were, one person couldn’t possibly address everyone, alone.

Yesterday’s cancelled schedules made it so that you had to make time to fit them in over the course of the week, including today. Today was stacked up to be incredibly busy as it was with back to back meetings, a casting audition for new talent for the greater part of the afternoon, followed by the first shoot for your new drama which would most likely continue very late into the night. You wondered if you’d just end up sitting in the office again working all night.

…

“Yes I read the script for the music video; why else would I be calling you myself? Eating whipped cream, looking somewhere longingly while having it smear all over their lips? Who approved this train wreck? Don’t give me that bullshit! There’s nothing innocent about that! I told
you to rebrand them away from their innocent image not make a bunch of seventeen year olds into some sex icon. They’re young and already selling well; they don’t need to scandalize themselves to increase their popularity. You disgust me! I better have a new proposal for their comeback on my desk by tomorrow morning!” You slammed down the phone, cutting off one of your producers. The industry sickened you sometimes.

You looked up to see your secretary standing there like a deer in headlights as he watched your meltdown. You’d think after all the times he’s witnessed this, he’d be used it by now, but no, each time, the poor boy looks like he’d experienced a bloody murder.

“Uhm, ma’am, your breakfast delivery is here,” he said hesitantly approaching your desk with an engraved brown paper bag with a braided handle.

“I didn’t order anything.”

“It has your name on it.” That’s strange, you thought, you most definitely did not order anything. When your secretary put it down on your desk, you were a little apprehensive of it. Every so often, your anti-fans would send you ‘gifts’ that could potentially kill you; poisoned desserts, cookies with glue in it, things made with expired ingredients in it, just to name a few. Not that you would ever eat it.

You picked up the tag attached to the handle for closer inspection, and it read Seto Kaiba. You weren’t convinced, so you picked up the phone on your desk and dialled his office. It rang twice before he picked up.

“Kaiba.”

“It’s me. Did you send me breakfast?”

“Yes, I was informed you didn’t eat this morning,” he sounded distracted.

“Oh. Thank you, I know you’re really busy.” You heard him sigh on the other end of the line.

“I left because I had a meeting early this morning, if that’s what you mean.”

“What? No! I’m genuinely touched, thank you.” Did he think you were being sarcastic because he wasn’t there this morning when you woke up? You heard him let out an ‘hmph.’ “Listen, I’ll be home late because I’ll be shooting my drama late tonight.”

“Fine. I’ll see you at home.” And with that he hung up.

You dismissed your secretary who was still glued to his earlier spot, and peered into the package. It had some mild looking chicken soup, melon salad and some type of artisan yoghurt. He was going to insist on making you eat bland food. It was the thought that counted, you reminded yourself.

…

Human intuition is a frightening thing. You can feel it in your gut when something bad is about to happen. Like when the phone rings bearing bad news and you already feel your stomach churning with uneasiness before you’ve even picked it up.
As you drove yourself back to the office after the drama shooting, entering the building, it was as if you had become clairvoyant.

You experienced this sensation of being blanketed by an unsettling feeling. A wave of goosebumps swept across your body and you could feel the little hairs on the back of your neck standing up. There was an eerie feeling grating at your nerves but you couldn’t place it.

The building was completely vacant with the exception of a couple of idol groups practicing and the security on duty, but that’s wasn’t what was unsettling you. You’ve been here after hours more times than you could care to remember over the years. There was something else.

You walked into your office to find a bouquet of flowers, wrapped in brown paper sitting on your desk. You could feel that unnerving sensation intensifying as you plucked the mint envelope to read the note.

“The eternal footman is holding your coat. Are you ready? It won’t be long now.”

You could feel a shiver sweep down your spine reading the small black print. You could hear your heartbeat in your ears. The sender was anonymous. The eternal footman; death, this was a death threat. Someone was threatening to kill you. You reflexively whipped your head back to look at the door at the far end of the office.

You had more than one or two enemies, and none of them were to be taken lightly. You couldn’t begin to imagine who it could be. You wondered if this was somehow related to yesterday’s break in.

You took off running towards the elevators, your heeled ankle boots echoing through the vacant hallways with every step you took against the stone floor. You sprinted all the way to the security operations room, bursting through the door, demanding to know who had delivered the flowers.

After reviewing the security footage, you discovered that it was delivered by a local florist. You had to settle for calling them tomorrow as it was past one in the morning already.

…

Your heart was still beating in your ears by the time you made it back to the mansion. You’ve received death threats before, but they were usually from deranged fans in the comment section of articles or random letters directed to your fan mail address composed of mismatched letters cut out from magazine articles to form words and sentences. Never has anyone declared their intentions so directly, so personally. They had gotten so close. It felt real this time.

You walked up the stairs to the third floor; a sensation of paralysis had overtaken you. As you walked into the bedroom, Seto wasn’t there. Your mind didn’t search for him.

Through the undrawn curtain, moonlight poured into the unlit room in streams, bathing you.

You walked up to the bed, laying down your robe. You took off your silk blouse, your wide-legged jeans, you unclasped your bra, laying it on the bed next to the robe you were meaning to change into, and just stood there. As if in a trance, as if in deep thought, you simply stood there, staring out at the silver streams of moonlight. Your thoughts were empty.

You could feel pins and needles dancing across your cheeks, down your scalp and in your ears.
You were feeling so much, and yet nothing at all. You wanted to reach out for your robe, but you didn’t. It was the strangest sensation.

You hadn’t heard the door open, and you didn’t feel the arms wrapping around your bare form until at least a few seconds had passed.

“I think I’ve given you enough warnings,” you heard Seto’s voice fall dangerously against your ear. You felt your goosebumps returning at his lustful tone. You could feel his lips against your ear.

His hands found their way to your slightly protruding hip bones, tracing them up your curves, his fingertips grazing your skin, over your stomach, the contours of your ribs and up to your breasts. He cupped them with both hands, massaging them, before his middle and forefingers brushed over your nipples, pinching them, rubbing his fingers against them, over and over.

You gasped at the sensation, letting your head fall back into his chest, allowing a deep exhale to escape your lips. It was as if the pleasure he was giving you was stimulating your senses back to life.

With his right hand he forced you to look over your shoulder, and tilting your chin up, he took your lips in his. You couldn’t tell if you responded. His kiss spoke of his desires but you couldn’t quite hear over the loudness of your empty thoughts.

His left hand continued to fondle your breast, while his right snaked down your body, past your hips, slipping under your lace panties. His fingers found their way in-between your folds, wet with arousal, as he teasingly stroked your entrance.

Even this was enough to send you over the edge; a loud moan escaped your lips, momentarily breaking the kiss. You could feel his smirk against your lips when he reclaimed them.

What he was doing to you made you feel as if you were on fire, and yet his presence was calming. It was as if he was both hellfire and holy water.

Then, as his fingers started to search deeper, you felt as if your brain was rewiring. You realized what he wanted and that you weren’t ready to give it to him.

“Stop,” you moaned. His fingers stopped moving and when you opened your eyes, all you could see were blue eyes, as deep as the ocean, staring down at you, slightly, very slightly concerned. “Stop,” you repeated.

You didn’t realize that your face had contorted into an expression that conveyed fear, but it wasn’t him you were afraid of. Your mind had regained its grip over reality and you were reminded of the reason you were momentarily incapacitated and in your thawed state, if you will, were beginning to feel the weight of the threat you had received. This you were afraid of.

He removed his fingers from you, slipping it out from under your panties, wet from your juices.

“Am I hurting you?” He inquired roughly, lightly panting.

You didn’t respond, wordlessly spinning around to face him, wrapping your arms around him as you rested the side of your head on his chest. He was in the clothes he wore at home; loose fitted pants and white shirt. You could hear his heart beating, distracting you from the sound of your own in your ears.

You told yourself not to burden him with your problems; he already had so much that required his attention. You would take care of that note on your desk yourself tomorrow morning.
You couldn’t give him what he wanted tonight, but selfishly hoped he could give you what you desired; comfort and the feeling of protection. He lifted his arms, wrapping them around you, you relaxing against his touch, as he granted your wish.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

“Nothing at all,” you replied hesitation evident in your voice. He could tell you were lying.

Chapter End Notes

All in all, it was a lot shorter than I was expecting it to be, but I think this chapter captured the tone of the overal series properly.

Always love hearing what you guys think so let me know!
Judas Kiss

Chapter Notes

I thought you guys would enjoy some fluff at the beginning before the absolute shit show that is the main plot gets on the road.

Please don't hate me!

Enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You were woken up at an ungodly hour of the morning by what sounded like a screaming match. When you opened your eyes, the lights were on. You could feel the back of your head throbbing at the noise.

“What do I pay you morons for!? Your entire job is to keep the servers up and maintained. Are your brains so miniscule that you couldn’t even manage such a simple task? How the hell did you manage to have one go down at this time of night? I’m connecting to the mainframe now.” You heard this tyrannizing followed by the sounded of ridiculously fast typing. As this continued for a few more minutes, where you may have drifted back to sleep for a while, you weren’t sure, the typing eventually stopped and the ‘reign of terror’ resumed. At this point, your brain couldn’t even comprehend what was being said between all the technical jargon. By the time it ended, you were awake, awake enough to not be able to fall back asleep right away. Not awake enough to form a tangible thought, at least not a sensible one.

“What-- time is …?” you managed to mumble, slightly pulling yourself up, the sheets falling away to your waist.

“Three.” You faintly registered a laptop being put back on the nightstand. Three in the morning meant you’ve slept less than an hour. You buried your head in your hands, considering whether it would piss off your husband if you clapped the lights back off.

You whined incoherently into your palms, voicing your frustration. It was more to yourself than for him to hear.

You felt the mattress being pushed down on either side of you and when you looked up, Seto was looming over you, arms caging you.

“Stop wearing these nightgowns, it makes me want to do unwholesome things to you,” he half-whispered, half-growled.

What he was saying didn’t make much sense to you. Your nightgowns were short, yes, but they were the night gowns you always wore back at home. This one even had longer, light, puffy sleeves that sat on and off the shoulders. What you failed to realize, having never worn them in the company of anyone else was that the white cotton –unlike the linen one you had worn yesterday –made it so that it was completely see-through, especially under the light, unintentionally giving it an erotic appearance.
What you also failed to understand was how this man could always have such a strong sexual appetite no matter what time of day.

Maybe your sleep deprived state was to blame but as he leaned in to you, cerulean eyes boring into you, you couldn’t help but notice how truly beautiful Seto Kaiba was. You swore those eyes held portals to universes far beyond your own. You must have seen his porcelain skin, his dark azure eyes that held all the shades of the sea, and his brown tousled mess of morning hair more times than you could count, but you’ve never been so thoroughly mesmerized as you were now. He was gorgeous.

He brushed his hand over your nightgown, tracing it over your breast as he buried his face in the crook of your neck, whispering something your mind, maddened by his hot breath, breaking against your skin like ocean waves, refused to listen to.

He pulled away to leave and, but you couldn’t fathom letting him go. In a moment of pure madness, you pulled on his arm, calling out his name.

“Wait, Seto, wait!” His name felt strange yet familiar as it left your lips. He looked back at you from the edge of your bedside, as you pulled yourself up to your knees and leaned over to embrace him. He returned your embrace.

His scent was comforting.

“I need to go,” he whispered back after a few moments.

...

You stared at the ceiling for another two hours or so, unable to fall asleep, before deciding to give up and get to work yourself.

This arranged marriage that basically fell out of the sky, the break in turned kidnapping attempt turned attempted murder, and now the sudden death threat; this was more excitement in one week than you’ve had in your entire life. Almost, your entirely life. All these events were seemingly unrelated but your intuition told you otherwise.

You needed to get a hold of things before it turned into a circus.

...

The sky hung above you in a dark pastel hue, refusing to allow day to break through them. Your company building seemed to go on forever in front of you, disappearing into the clouds.

The building was still entirely vacant as you stepped into the elevators in the lobby. No one in their right mind came to work at five thirty in the morning, especially not after getting less than an hour of sleep.

You scowled at the empty smoothie cup in your hand, wishing for it to be coffee.
You absentmindedly watched the floor numbers increasing, wondering why after all these years, you haven’t installed an express elevator to the top floor.

Suddenly the elevator violently shook, the power cut off and it stopped moving entirely. You drew in a sharp breath to steady yourself. The darkness, especially in such closed quarters was mortifying. You turned on the flashlight app of your phone.

You tried to call the security operations room but something in the elevator was blocking off all signal. There was something interfering with the signal. You immediately began suspecting foul play.

You weren’t sure how much time had passed when finally a dim orange light from the back-up generators flickered on. You cautiously edged your way around the elevator to get to the control panel, meaning to call security from there.

You pressed the orange emergency button, and again, and yet even after the sixth or seventh time, many minutes later, it was unresponsive. You quickly entered your passcode into the control panel, manually opening the switch board – not that you would have any idea what any of the wires meant – in an attempt to hardwire this tin can that was holding you captive. The moment you opened the panel, there was a spark and the elevator fell a few feet.

You fell back, stabilizing yourself with your hands outstretched against the wall of the elevator, your phone slipping away from you and sliding across the floor of the elevator. Then, when you thought the horror couldn’t get any worse, the back-up generator died. The flashlight on your phone, on the far end of the elevator floor was now the only source of light.

You could hear your own breathing inside the empty space, coming out choppy, short and rapid. You fixed yourself into a crouching position, one hand resting on the support rail which ran across the interior of the elevator, extremely careful not to make any sudden movements.

As romanticized as being immortally young was in literature, meeting an untimely death, plummeting down an empty shaft in this tin can, forty or so stories was not something that was on your agenda. You planned to live long enough to find the bastards that put you here.

You reached out to the open control panel, but before your fingertips so much as touched the wires, the elevator began falling again. You were thrown against the ceiling of the elevator as it fell rapidly through what you assumed were quite a few floors.

When it finally stopped, gravity slammed you back on to the floor of the elevator car.

You weren’t sure what had happened but you felt as if something was crushing you and holding you down. You tried to get up but fell back limp on the floor. Before another tangible thought occurred, the car climbed a few stories very fast and dropped back down just as quickly.

When you fell back on to the elevator floor again, whatever it was that had made you feel excruciating pain in your hip earlier was no longer there. You briefly entertained the thought of how ironic it was that the second fall had fixed whatever it was that the first fall had damaged. Still, your right shoulder blade was throbbing and your shoulder felt as if it was ripped to the point where you wondered if you had possibly dislocated it, but considering the fact that you could still move it, you knew it was probably just terribly bruised.

It occurred to you that if the elevator was climbing and falling back as smoothly as it was – at a demonic speed, but it wasn’t unstable – it was likely that the cables weren’t what were tampered with, it was the mechanisms of the car.
You scrambled to get a hold of the support bar you had rested your hand on earlier so that you wouldn’t become a human yo-yo in this metal box. Securing yourself with your left hand, you turned to look at the control panel again.

The elevator plummeted rapidly again at full tilt. You could feel the air leaving you; the resistance caused by your constant state, anchored to the side bar against the rapid velocity of the elevator’s drop caused an unbearable pressure to gather in your forehead, threatening to burst. You buried your head in your knees, attempting to breathe. The car kept dropping with no signs of coming to a halt. From how things were looking, this thing was going to drop all the way to the basement.

You had no intention of becoming a permanent decoration on the walls of this tin can. You forced yourself to lift your head, turning it to look at the control panel for what would certainly be the last time if you didn’t figure something out within the next five seconds.

There were more black and grey wires than you could count. Ignoring those, you diverted your attention to the red, green and blue ones, staring at them willing for them to grow signs of what they each controlled.

From how long you’ve been dropping for, and considering the floor count, you knew you didn’t have much time left. You decided to gamble. What’s the worst that could happen, you mused. You were already on a one way trip to hell as it was.

You forced your free hand up to your hair, pulling out the long hair pin that resembled a chopstick that was holding your hair in place. Deciding that red has always been your lucky colour, you wrung the pin through the red wire in the center, missing the first time, but pulling it out the second time with all the strength you could muster.

The lights flashed on momentarily before dying again, and the doors started opening and closing erratically, as the elevator car continued to fall.

Deciding that this would probably be your only chance at escaping, as you passed the floor of one story, you swung yourself out the car, praying that the doors won’t close on you half way, because there was no guessable pattern. You dived out, emerging about a foot or so above the ground of the first level, before landing painfully on the cold stone floor. Grateful to be alive, you staggered to your feet, feeling every bone and muscle in your body aching. It physically hurt to breath.

Two attempted murders within the span of three days, plus a death threat? Now it was personal.

It was obvious now that none of what had happened to you within the past week was coincidental or simply you being in the wrong place at the wrong time. It was all intentionally done. Someone wanted you gone and they wanted you gone now.

You heard the elevator crashing in the distance below you, emulating the sound of a bomb explosion.

You paused to collect yourself. You might have been in pain, but you weren’t going to give whatever creep you were sure was monitoring you – they couldn’t have guessed the exact time you would be in the elevator otherwise – the satisfaction of that. Pulling the shoulders back down your arms of your long sleeved, black crop top and straightening out your jeans, you started walking towards the security control room, as your security team rushed forward to meet you.

“Are you alright ma’am?” one guard asked you frantically.
“Yes, no thanks to you buffoons. Take care of that,” you said motioning to the elevator. “Find out what caused it, all of you. I don’t ever want to find out that one individual was left working on this alone at any time. None of you are to disclose these events to anyone else and if I do hear even a word from someone, understand that you will be held accountable. You are aware of how good I am at keeping track of every rumour in this building are you not? ”

They nodded furiously, mumbling incoherent apologies. The chances of this being an inside job were high, and you couldn’t afford to take any more chances with your life, not after how close this last one had come.

“Ma’am are you sure you don’t need to go to the hospital?” another guard asked pointing to your forehead. You reached up to touch where he had pointed and bringing down to inspect the wetness your fingers had felt, you realized you were bleeding. Wiping away at the cut with the back of your hand, you yelled at them to get back to work, ordering them to check the other elevators thoroughly so that no one else gets hurt.

As you continued towards the control room, it occurred to you that your phone went down with the elevator, but securing the footage of what happened, if anything did record during the incident, and more importantly the days leading up to the incident was more important. If it indeed was an inside job, you needed to get to it before someone had the chance to wipe the footage off the mainframe.

You walked into the security control room, which really was an entire department –one you were starting consider was entirely useless – just within the confines of a really large hall, thus the name ‘security control room.’ You stepped into the office of the security chief, who wasn’t on duty at six in the morning, locking the door behind you. You connected to the footage from that morning to see that only you had entered the building since one of your idol groups that were practicing last night left around two in the morning.

No footage was recorded from within the elevator during the time of the incident, which was expected since there was no power, and you spent the next few hours painstakingly reviewing the footage for the past two weeks tediously, in excruciating detail, careful not to miss anything.

You discovered that the only possible people that could have tampered with the elevators were the third-party technical maintenance company that had serviced all the elevators three days ago. There was no footage of the maintenance while it was in progress but it was obvious that unless it was done prior to the two weeks you had reviewed, this was when the mechanisms were manipulated.

You scribbled down the address and contact information of the maintenance company, intending to pay them a visit, along with the florist that had delivered possibly the deadliest flower bouquet of your life.

When you finally swung the door open to leave, you found your chief of security, joined by the entire security team present, bowing at a ninety degree angle to you, offering you their sincerest apologies. You weren’t sure how long they had been standing there like that.

“If someone saw you, they’d think I was mob boss. Stop wasting your time and get the hell back to work. This sort of incompetency will not be tolerated a second time around, so you better find out what caused the crash by the time I get back, if you want to hold on to those uniforms,” you snarled.

Everyone jolted back to life at those words and scrambled back to their stations. You were handed your phone, flat as a pancake. On your way out, you reminded them that none of what they saw today was to be disclosed to absolutely anyone outside of the security department.
It was around ten in the morning by now and as you stormed back into the lobby, now bustling with employees. A dramatic silence fell over everyone in place of the usual chatter that persisted as they causally bowed to you. They all paused for a moment bowing, almost as if they could sense the murderous aura you were emanating as you tore across the place. You dismissed them with your hand as you made your way to the front entrance. You had instructed your driver to bring your car around to the front.

As you walked, you contemplated what could possibly motivate someone to kill you. Sure you had enough corporate enemies to fill every seat in Tokyo dorm, but resentment alone has never fueled someone to the point of wanting to murder you before. What could anyone possibly gain from your death?

There were too many people to consider and eliminate so instead, you paused to consider the benefits outside of pure satisfaction that one could gain from this pursuit. The only thing to be gained that you could think of was financial gain, but if you were to die, then all your assets would just…

Your mind wandered back to the creation of the marital estate and inheritance clauses of your marriage contract.

You could feel your heart beat in your ears again, reverberating in your gut.

If you were to die, then all of your assets would be passed on to Seto Kaiba.

Chapter End Notes

As always, I love hearing what you think so do tell :)}
So this chapter deals mainly with the relationship dynamics and development of the main characters so it does lack alot of action, hope you don't mind :)

The only one that would financially benefit from you being permanently removed from the picture would be Seto. That didn’t seem right.

That explained a lot and yet nothing at all. It explained why he insisted on marrying you so urgently; it explained the means he took to achieve it. It also explained how all this drama started right after your marriage; how the intruder broke into Seto’s mansion and why Seto suddenly disappeared, leaving you all alone in the dark that night and how he conveniently re-appeared just as you finished taking care of the intruder. It also explained the gun under his pillow to a certain extent. It just didn’t feel right. Rationality was stacking up against him and all you had to defend his innocence with were your emotions. You had grown fond of him.

Is your husband trying to kill you?

The question just lingered there. You were unwilling to acknowledge it.

You refused to answer it.

Your rationality insisted that Seto trying to assassinate you was a very real possibility; the most likely possibility.

You felt as if time stood still for a moment. You couldn’t tell if your employees were actually standing there unmoving, waiting, or whether your opposing thoughts were collapsing in on themselves, causing that illusion.

You looked down at the USB in your hand with all the footage you had made a copy of, considering your next course of action.

You turned around sharply on your heels. You wouldn’t take the car waiting outside for you; instead you took off towards the basement, running down four flights of stairs to the second level of the basement.

A red Porsche would be too conspicuous, and then again, so would your sports model, convertible Mercedes, but at least it was black. Before you stepped in, you searched the car for explosives, trackers, remote control manipulator units, cameras, mics; anything that could have been planted by your enemy. You were literally crawling under your car like a madwoman.

Over the course of the day, you visited the third-party technical maintenance company and the florist. You found out that the man that was dispatched from the maintenance company, Matsu Fukuda hadn’t reported for work since that day of the service visit and the company couldn’t even contact the man. He was quite literally MIA. The florist led you to a similar dead end. The bouquet
of flowers was paid for in cash, and she said she remembered who had paid for them quite well, though he was wearing all black and a motorcycle helmet was obscuring the view of his face the entire time. She added that he was very tall and slim built. She said she remembered this so well since he had specifically requested violets and magnolias in the bouquet, which she thought was strange considering those flowers in combination expressed sadness and death and yet it was being sent to you, someone who was in perfect health and hasn’t suffered any loss – at least publicly. Her little shop didn’t have any security cameras for you to physically take a look at the man and observing the little avenues around it; neither did any of the surrounding areas.

You returned to your office to find another food delivery sitting on your desk, the sender was the same as yesterday’s breakfast. Making a note of the contents, you dumped it in the garbage can. You couldn’t disregard the likelihood of Seto being your potential killer, and if he was, you couldn’t eliminate the possibility of the food being poisoned. On your way home later that night, you considered calling Soryu, to have him track down this Matsu Fukuda character, but then decided against it. You decided to sleep on it before calling in a mob boss.

…

You walked into the bedroom, your eyes drifting to Seto, sitting on the bed, typing away at his laptop.

“You’re home early,” you greeted, trying your best to retain a natural composure.

“It’s past midnight. What happened to your phone?” He didn’t sound too pleased.

“It…fell. Did you call me?”

“It fell?”

“Yes, did you call?”

“I did. Have you had dinner?”

“Yes.” With that, you wordlessly walked into the walk-in-closet, which currently housed a lot more of Seto’s clothes than yours, before walking into the bathroom.

Looking over your body in the full length mirror, you were a mess. You had bruises forming in various places on your body; your left shoulder, right shoulder blade, both your hips and surrounding abdomen area, below your left knee, and many other places you knew you wouldn’t even notice until tomorrow. You also noticed that some of the cuts on your right arm had reopened, causing blood to seep through the bandages.

You considered whether you would need physiotherapy for the whiplash your neck probably suffered in the fall and if it was a smart idea to have a CT scan done for your head. The pain had subsided after overdosing on some painkillers – which in hindsight couldn’t have been good for the lining of your stomach – but you knew that you would feel the pain much more strongly tomorrow and no painkiller was going to be enough to suppress that, but for now, you were going to drown the soreness in a warm bath.

Even now, walking back to the bed was agonizing. Seto’s eyes wandered over to you from his spot
on the bed. You could see his brows knitting slightly as he watched the way you were walking. He stowed away his laptop on the nightstand. He stood up as if to come over to help you and then sat back down as you reached the bed.

You slipped under the sheets, suppressing the urge to cry out in pain.

“You’re wearing pajamas,” Seto observed from beside you.

“Yes, you told me not to wear my nightgowns,” you lied. He grunted, seemingly unsatisfied.

You turned on your side, facing away from him. You heard him clap the lights off. You had considered asking him to allow you to use a different room but that would only raise his suspicions.

Keep your friends close, keep your enemies closer they say, well you were practically sleeping with yours.

You felt him inch closer to you, placing an arm over you, pulling you into him. It was so unexpected that you didn’t have time to mask your pain as his body pressed against your own bruised one. You cried out in pain.

He immediately lifted his arm away from you, supporting himself up on his other elbow. He peered over at you.

“Are you in pain?” You looked up at him; there was no sense in lying…

“I walked into my desk. I think I bruised my hip.” …completely. He watched you for a moment before forcefully flipping you over on your back, eliciting another cry of pain, as he pulled down the waistband of your pajamas pants. He slid up your blouse, attempting to inspect the bruise. Your hands reflexively shot down pulling your fabric of clothing away from him, before he could properly see the extent of the bruise. “What the hell are you doing?” you yelled, completely caught off guard.

“It needs to be treated.”

“Just go to sleep, I’ll be fine.”

“You won’t be able to walk with that tomorrow,” he growled. If he only knew, you grimaced.

Your rational mind once again reminded you that he could be the perpetrator; it solicited you to feel resentment, repulsion, to plan retaliation. And yet all you could begin to feel for him was this unrelenting fondness, and that was maddening.

How can someone so beautiful be so cruel? Did you fear the man or the thought of accepting his actions and intentions?

An all-consuming melancholy swept over you, you had started calling the scent of his shirts, home. His scent; he was slowly becoming home. The thought of losing that was unfathomable, unbearable.

Had you perhaps overly romanticized the idea of him, over who he really was? Did you perhaps fear more so the idea of being disillusioned, rather than actually losing the man?

You felt he centered you.

Perhaps the greatest fear yet was growing more attached, finding more purpose for him in your life than you already have. To continue to grow fonder of him would certainly be a tragic fate, and yet here you were, wanting to place your hand on his skin.
He was a murderer, yelled your conscience, and at that, you couldn’t find it in yourself to lift you
hand. You couldn’t find it in yourself to reach out to him, to touch him.

“I’m tired,” you dismissed him, pushing him away as he continued to watch over you. And indeed,
you were tired, you had barely gotten an hour of sleep the night before, but that wasn’t what was
exhausting.

On your side again, you felt him more gently drape his arm over you. He didn’t question you
further.

There was a distance between the two of you again; you had created it, but then maybe, he had
given you the matches to light those bridges aflame. You could hardly tell what he was thinking, he
never expressed how he felt, he was vague in his responses when asked and he never spoke of his
family or his past. He never talked about a future for the two of you, though perhaps eleven days of
knowing someone was too early for that. Or maybe, this was all the space he had for you in his
life, in the present, for a very short time, away from the eyes of his family, and the public. A short
moment in the present was all he needed you to exist in.

You wanted to know, if an epiphany such as this was enough to break a human heart. The answer
was no, you were still breathing. Perhaps, you hadn’t known him long enough.
In your dreams, you saw vivid depictions of many things, murders in folklores, painted dragons,
burnt villages, tragedy; things you didn’t even know your mind had seen. All these different
sequences of events seemed unrelated but you knew the underlying theme they all represented.

…

You were woken by the sensation of discomfort. You felt smothering warmth encapsulate your
body, cold sweat had broken over your back and yet your skin felt like it was rolling on embers. It
was the feeling you get when you were too tightly bound by your sheets on an early summer night.
You neck felt displaced, your limbs disoriented and the agony from your injuries were pulsating
through every nerve of your body. Your pillow felt oddly shaped and rigid.

When your eyes opened again to the dim light, you questioned if any time had passed. Then, you
trained your bleary eyes on your immediate field of vision. The first thing you became aware of
was the fabric of your husband’s navy blue shirt, unbuttoned at the top, revealing his toned upper
chest. You slowly realized that your neck was awkwardly resting on Seto’s outstretched hand, your
forehead pressed against his cheek, your right leg bent and swung over his torso.

You tried to move yourself, careful not to rouse him, but he was already awake, possibly for much
longer before you. His outstretched hand under you shot up to hold you in place. The sudden
pressure on your shoulders forced you to groan again in pain. Though you did your best to muffle
the cry, it would have been difficult for him to not notice. You felt his face shifting to look at you.

“What happened to you?” he asked exasperated, sarcastically continuing to inquire. “Did you bump
it on your desk, or did you drop it like your phone?”

He knew. Either he was more sensitive to you than you had realized, or maybe you weren’t as
subtle as you had originally given yourself credit for. Perhaps though, he knew because he had
been the cause of it, and just gained some sadistic satisfaction from hearing you voice your pain.
You refused to answer.

“Why did you marry me?”

“What?”

“Why did you do it?” you rephrased yourself.

“I told you,” he groaned, “I wanted you.”

“Yes, but why? Your reasons, what were they?”

“And you insist on having this conversation at two a.m. in the morning?”

“Is there a more befitting time to ask such an absurd question than at an absurd hour of the morning such as this?” At the very least, you wanted him to tell you that it wasn’t for your financial assets, but for what other reason would a man as powerful as Seto Kaiba marry? It felt so obvious that it didn’t even beg the question.

He seemed to be at a loss for words.

“You’re being difficult,” he sighed.

You closed your eyes at the irony of that statement. So this was how he insisted on playing this, fine.

You felt his lips pressing against your hairline as he ordered you to go back to sleep. You wouldn’t allow yourself to be pacified by his patronization.

...

You opened your eyes again to the familiar view of his navy shirt. Your face was pressed against his chest. You were lying on his one arm, while the other was around you. You lifted your eyes to look at him and noticed his eyes were flickering. The positioning felt off also, and shifting your head to peer over your shoulder you realized why.

He was on his phone, checking his emails behind your back - should have expected that much. How romantic, you mused sarcastically.

You asked yourself if those were the eyes of a murderer, and who was worse, the murderer, or the woman who could tolerate to be in the embrace of the murderer, despite knowing his intentions.

You were torn away from your psychoanalyzing when Seto shifted his gaze down to you and asked you a question. His words fell on deaf ears. You saw his lips move but your mind didn’t seem to care for what he had to say.

He placed his hand on the side of your face, tilting his head slightly.

“You are awake, are you not?”

“Yes.”
“What’s with you?” he snapped. “You’re completely out of it.”

You hummed almost dismissively in agreement, motioning to get up. The moment you made to move, you could feel a sensation similar to electricity burning through to all your nerve endings. You inhaled sharply; face contorting in agony, as you face fell up towards the ceiling, lips parting. You may have moaned at the sensation.

“That’s it,” you heard Seto finally losing his temper, sitting up next to you as he motioned to rip your blouse away from your chest.

“Get your hands off of me!” you yelled in retaliation, throwing his hands away from you, pushing yourself away from him and managing to fall off the edge of the bed in the process.

You landed on your back, unable to supress the sharp cry of pain that escaped you. Your back arched as you gasped; overwhelmed by the aching that pulsated through your entire being. For a moment your mind went blank, and when you recovered, Seto was kneeling beside you, pulling you up, and leaning you against him.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” he demanded. You paused to catch your breath, waiting for the pain to subside to form a thought.

“Wouldn’t you like to know!” you snarled as you composed yourself to some extent, before shakily pushing yourself up to your feet, walking yourself to the bathroom.

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?” you heard him roar behind the bathroom door.

He was much more perceptive that you had given him credit for and you were an aching mess that couldn’t conceal much. The next two weeks were going to be difficult under his watchful eyes.

On your way out of the walk-in-closet, you noticed him pick up the watch you had gifted him, out of the chest of glass roofed drawers sitting in the center. You paused for a moment longer as you observed him tightening the clasp around his wrist. You turned to leave as he pulled a grey suit blazer over his arms.

Your own dressing experience this morning was beyond excruciating. So much so that it closely emulated some form of medieval torture ritual. You couldn’t reach your sore arms behind to zip up your white lace dress, but you couldn’t ask Seto to help you as he would see the bruises. It also didn’t help that the two of you weren’t on speaking terms right at this moment. You couldn’t bring yourself to outstretch your arms to pull your blazer through so instead you draped it over your shoulders. You felt your spine would snap in half if you had to bend down to do up your shoes so you slipped into a pair of heeled mules. You went through all of this before realizing that the bruise below your knee was hideously visible. You had hoped the hem of your dress would reach far enough to cover it, but it appeared as though you had grossly miscalculated.

‘Fuck it,’ you thought. Seto had already seen it, you saw him eyeing it suspiciously earlier.

…

Breakfast arrived on your desk as it had the two days prior, and so did lunch. Both these packages swiftly found their way to the garbage bin. When dinner was also delivered, your suspicions intensified.
Whether it was his insistence or his uncharacterized consideration; neither could be justified by innocent intentions.

The dinner package also found itself in the garbage.

Thankfully, most of your day had consisted of sitting at your desk, reviewing proposals and reading over the quarterly reports, much to the relief of your aching everything.

You sat at your desk late that night, tossing your new phone absentmindedly between your hands, Soryu’s contact displayed on the screen, wondering if this was a situation that warranted you calling in the mafia. You decided to push off the decision for another night before leaving the office for the day.

…

As you slipped under the sheets that night, you tried your best to stop yourself from unraveling under the tension. Seto hadn’t spoken a word to you the entire day since the words that were exchanged this morning.

There was a question that was burning a hole through your conscious mind. A question you felt you owed him before you arrived at any conclusions, one that would conclusively confirm his intentions towards you.

You felt him drape an arm, almost routinely over your turned form. Your marriage was falling apart. Though, was that really a concern at this moment? You were about to make it worse.

You struggled to bring yourself to word the question. You feared his reaction, but more so, his answer. You felt you already knew how he would reply while sincerely hoping for him to prove you wrong.

“If I told you, that I wanted your name removed from being the successor to my estate, would you oblige?” You could feel your whole body literally trembling along with your uneven breaths. Your ears were ringing. You felt him exhale.

“I don’t know what this is about, but that’s the one thing I cannot do for you.”

You could feel your heart sink.

That’s all you needed to hear.

Chapter End Notes

For anyone that has maybe picked up on it already, the character reference to Soryu is the same Soryu from KBTBB game. I may include more characters, I may not, I don’t know just yet. Now, I haven't played it myself and literally saw it over the shoulder of a friend so if the references I make are incorrect do let me know.

Let me know what you guys think :)
Chapter Notes

Hi again! This is probably the shortest chapter to date but I felt this needed to be on its own to properly maintain the tone of it before we move on to the thick of things. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Even if that answer could cost us our marriage?" You sat up to face him. That wasn’t the answer you had wanted to hear. “Seto –,” you closed your eyes briefly, as you exhaled; trying to find the words to ask him if this was final answer he wanted to give.

“What are you talking about?” he followed you, sitting up, blue eyes narrowing in on yours. “I stand by what I said.”

“I see. If that’s your final answer.” you whispered looking down.

“It is,” he declared firmly.

You just stared him, blankly. What now? You asked yourself.

In your mind, this question was meant to offer you clarity, but hearing his answer, you found yourself at a dead end. Perhaps you had been hoping him to answer differently so that you could put this all behind you, and yet this just prolonged the nightmare. In your mind, had he answered like he had, you had made up your mind to take him out before he got to you. But in the face of reality, you found your resolve crumbling.

He placed his hands on your shoulders, causing you to wince slightly. His eyes drifted down to his hands on your shoulders and then back up to meet yours.

“Explain yourself,” he demanded, his tone was calm but you could hear the frustration, his already nonexistent patience had thinned to its limit.

If there was ever one, singularly important moment where you needed to use your acting as a life skill, this would be it, as you forcefully supressed the urge to come undone entirely.

You refused to acknowledge it. You could now answer it with a great degree of certainty, but you wouldn’t.

You heard him groan as he pulled off his shirt, tossing it on the floor, falling back on the bed, placing the back of his arm over his eyes.

“Whatever this is about, I don’t have the patience for it right now.”

You had asked his name to be removed from being your successor and yet he seemed to be
unbothered by it, as if he didn’t question your reasons, almost as if he already knew the reason you were asking.

You felt if you sat there for a moment longer, you would surely suffocate in the tension that was building like a thick fog around you two. You turned to leave the bed when Seto’s hand darted up from its place by his side to grab yours, effectively stopping you from leaving. His other arm was still covering his eyes, so you wondered how he was so precise with his movements.

“Where are you going?”

“Wherever it is, I’m sure you don’t have the patience for it right now,” you hissed.

He pulled his arm away from his face, his blue eyes iridescent against the moonlight pouring in, as they penetrated in to your being.

“What is it that you want?” It sounded less like a question and more like a disdainful response to a ransom demand.

“Have you ever thought of having children?” you blurted out without thinking, it was your version of asking if he imagined a future for the two of you. “…with me?” you asked apprehensively.

He was clearly caught off guard.

“Where is this coming from?”

He was right; you must look like you were all over the place when the root cause of all of your questions was unclear.

“You don’t want to answer,” you replied, disappointment evident in your voice. “I understand that’s a no.”

He sighed.

“You’re much too young for me to even consider having children with you.” What was that supposed to mean? You were beginning to hate his ambiguous answers. You allowed a wry smile to spread across your face, it told him what you had made of his answer, that you had received it as a no. “You’re not ready. If we have children now, I’ll end up taking care of both them and you. I don’t have time for that.”

If nothing else had stood to be decisive proof, his last statement did. In all honesty, you didn’t even know if you wanted children, but all his answers were focused on the present time, none referring to the future.

You didn’t know what more you could ask to prove he wasn’t the perpetrator, to yourself. He hadn’t given you a ring, you’ve never been introduced to his family, and he clearly didn’t marry you of love – that much was obvious.

“It’s a shame, I thought you would have made a good father.” You spoke in a tense which suggested that this would never come to be, as you lay back on your side.

You were facing away from him to see the confusion that was spreading across his face. You felt the mattress shift as he also turned his back on you.

He waited until you fell asleep to return to your side to hold you.
You were becoming increasingly paranoid. You had swept your office twice already for planted bugs this morning, and it was only half past nine.

Over the course of the past two days, your security department had discovered a small camera attached to the interior of the elevator along with an external, remote manipulation device. It was sent to your gaming corporation’s lab for analysis and the results were that the level of sophistication that microchip sized gadget was engineered with could only have come from either your own research and development department or Kaiba Corp.’s, except, one of the micro-components that were used in the device were discontinued from use in your own lab over three months ago.

You sat there, passing the little chip between your fingers, as if willing for it to confess something about its creator to you. No such luck.

Breakfast arrived, and found itself promptly in the bin. You couldn’t help but think about what a massive waste of food this was.

The scale of this threat was beyond what the police could handle, and yet you couldn’t bring yourself to call in Soryu’s men either. A very remote part of you worried Seto getting hurt if he indeed was who was hunting you down, but then in that case, did it really matter? The answer was it did, and it was stealing at your sanity.

Seto was already home when you returned to the mansion that night. You were actually quite surprised, given that it was barely nine-thirty.

You were forced to endure a silent and awkward dinner with him, where neither of you apparently had any desire to address the other. This existence in such close proximity with him was becoming agonizing.

You had opted to wear a long sleeved night gown; the pajamas were becoming too warm to wear at night. The white gown would conceal everything except for the bruise below your knee.

Seto was working away on his laptop when you climbed into bed. You couldn’t help your thoughts as they raced back to the analysis you had received earlier that day of the microchip. You couldn’t even bring yourself to look at him.

His eyes narrowed as he watched you. You couldn’t clearly read what his blue eyes were calculating, but you could begin to guess.

“What are you hiding?” he suddenly growled. You were expecting that question, just not that tone of voice right off the bat.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” He slammed his laptop shut, putting it away.
“I’m too tired today for your antics,” he snapped. You turned your body away from him. “I’ll give you one more chance to tell me.”

You didn’t move. You felt his fingers burying into your shoulder painfully, pulling you towards him on your back.

He climbed over you, pinning you down. He gripped you by the neck of your linen dress, tearing the fabric down the center with brute strength. Your eyes widened in disbelief, simultaneously twisting into an expression which conveyed fear and outrage. You were panting as your body tried to dissipate the sheer shockwave that had pulsed through you in that moment. You were ridden with so much terror that you found yourself unable to move under the fire burning in his blue eyes.

His eyes contorted into a look of thinly veiled horror, as he traced his hands along your shoulders down to your now awfully bruised left breasts which had turned a dark purple and blue with clotted blood. You knew that by now, your entire body looked like a blurred mosaic of blue, black and purple. You winced as his fingers brushed over you.

“Who did this to you?” he demanded in a voice so deep it was unlike you ever heard before. You looked away.

“I fell.”

“Don’t give me that bullshit, what the hell happened to you?”

Of all the things your mind considered, an excuse, should a situation like this one arise, was not one of them.

You looked away, closing your eyes, willing for this whole situation to just evaporate in to thin air. He just stared, carefully inspecting the bruises, waiting for you to crack under the deafening silence, and you did.

“Let me go.” You demanded, continuing to look away.

“Like hell I will,” he growled dangerously, “Tell me what happened. Now!”

“I don’t want to talk about it. What does it matter to you? Let me go.” You tried struggling against him but it was useless, you should have known that by now. The movement only made your bruises ache more.

“Did you bruise your brain? You’re my wife, when someone dares to touch you, they answer directly to me.” His voice was low and seething.

His blue eyes flickered over your naked form, intently studying every inch, careful not to miss even one bruised pigment on your skin. He ran his hand over your arm as he did this, deep in thought.

“Tell me who did this to you so I can tear their soul out of their body!” He bellowed.

You stopped breathing at that, mind emptying of whatever thoughts you had been forming in that instant. It took a moment for your hearing to return again, your thoughts would take another few moments after that.

Is he genuinely concerned and unaware or is he acting? You couldn’t tell.

“You really don’t know?” you asked, your voice wouldn’t produce itself louder than a whisper.

“I have a hunch,” he spoke through gritted teeth.
"Drop the act, Seto, I know everything."

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think!!!!
“You can drop the act now, I know what you’re doing,” you managed in a whisper, again.

He had your upper arms pinned down, but you could still move your forearms. Your fingertips were just brushing against the trigger of the gun under his pillow. You willed yourself to not break eye contact, as you strained every joint in your fingers as they painfully stretched across the sheets, pulling the gun towards you under the pillow.

“You’re just prolonging the inevitable!” His voice raised itself a decibel higher than you could bear to hear and your thumb instinctively tripped off the safety, lifting your forearm up, you fired the gun.

White dust fell on Seto’s hair like snow.

Your chest rose and fell rapidly, trying to process what your body had done in a rush of adrenaline. You didn’t bring your eyes up to look at the bullet lodged into the high ceiling, because you didn’t know where you had aimed.

Your husband wasn’t nearly as shaken, but his grip around you loosened. If he had experienced shock or confusion in that moment, his blue eyes concealed it incredibly well. This was when you should have pointed the barrel at his head, but you couldn’t do it. Instead, in a moment of weakness you dropped the gun.

“If you want to kill me, go ahead, but at least do it with some honour,” you said motioning to the gun with your eyes.

“You still trust me,” he declared, as what was a combination of a wry smile and a grimace spread across his face. You watched in confusion at these words. “I know you, you would never have dropped that gun if you for a second thought that I would pick it back up and shoot you. You trust
“You’re wrong, it was an impulse decision. How can you be so sure?” There was no sense in lying.

“I trust you. I wouldn’t have let you sleep in my bed with a fully loaded gun next to my head if I didn’t.” He continued at your stunned silence. “Now, tell me how this happened.”

You desperately wanted to believe him, but you couldn’t bring yourself to. Words eluded you. You just watched the white plaster dust falling off his hair.

“Is this why you asked about us having children?” he asked sighing.

“Get off. I’m going to put some clothes on,” you finally spoke.

“When you’re older… if it’s something you think—” he interrupted himself, “if it’s safe for you to have children, then yes, I would like to.”

“What?”

“I would never hurt you. I also have no intention of losing you. Who did this?”

His tone was still forceful and he was still not really answering your question but there was a sense of sincerity to his tone that you couldn’t ignore.

“I don’t know. My company’s elevator fell forty floors down an empty shaft. It was rigged. The microchip manipulator was made in your company’s lab, most likely. Explain that.”

He looked over you again for a moment.

“I would need to look at the chip to explain that to you. Did you go to the hospital?”

“No.”

“We’re going, now!” He got up to leave.

“You’re avoiding my question again!”

“Whatever you think you’re dealing with, you’re in a lot more danger than you think. I’m not your enemy. Now get dressed so we can go get your head checked, because clearly, that fall did a lot more damage that you realize,” he ordered as he walked off into the walk-in closet.

“Are you implying that I’m not right in the head?”

“I’m not implying it.”

…

Coming back from the hospital, it was dawn. Besides the severe bruising, which they expected would heal within the next two-three weeks, there luckily were no complications.

You were flicking at your nails, looking down at your lap when Seto suddenly spoke.

“There’s a rat on your board.”
“There are many rats on my board, ones that have been sitting in those chairs a little too long to be uprooted overnight. What’s your point?”

“The idea of having you marry to stabilize your position, their intentions ran deeper than you think. My involvement with you ruined those plans, or so I had hoped.”

“What are you saying?” You interrupted, looking over at him. He had his gaze firmly fixed on the road.

“When the acquisition of your grandfather’s gaming company began going south for the pompous windbags of the former board, they devised a plan to pressure you into marrying a suitor of their choice, someone to the likes of Yohshimura – a nephew to one of the former members. The idea was that once they became the successor to your estate through marriage, to have you killed off. The whole media upheaval I would assume was their way of pressuring you. There was probably a very specific member of the board that suggested the idea, think back.”

“How do you know all this?” You questioned skeptically, narrowing your eyes with suspicion.

“It’s the sort of thing I know.”

“You’re not doing yourself any favours with an explanation like that,” you pushed.

“I happened upon the conversation coincidentally, if you must know, through a paper wall of a traditional Japanese restaurant while I was there for business.”

“And this concerned you how?”

“I had my… interests invested in you long before that conversation.” He looked somewhat uncomfortable admitting to that.

“We’ve never met.”

“I knew enough to know that I wanted you,” he face contorted into a scowl. You allowed a small smile to escape at that.

‘You fell for a pretty face. Men are so typical,’ you thought to yourself.

“You fell for the Nation’s Fairy, that’s disappointing. I’m sure you know by now that I’m nothing like that.”

“I don’t dislike what I’ve come to know,” his scowl grew tighter. Was he saying he liked you better having learnt your actual personality or that he wasn’t bothered by it so he would tolerate it?

“And you think they are still following through with their plans to have me eliminated? Despite us getting married?” There was no way that those removed board members didn’t know you had married Seto Kaiba. If not on your board, at least on his board, there were bound to be rats leaking information, there was no question about that. The only question was how many of them there were.

“Most likely, though I had hoped that me being your successor would discourage them.” Well, that explained last night’s conversation. If Seto had been removed from being your next-of-kin, your company assets would have been distributed among your board members in the unlikely case of your untimely…departure.

“Are you suggesting that you married me in order to save me?”
“Don’t be ridiculous, I’m not painting myself to be some knight in shining armour. I would have married you either way, eventually. It just had to be done in a more hostile manner than you would have liked, given the circumstances.”

“Given normal circumstances, are you insisting that I would have married you under my own free will?”

“Yes.”

You couldn’t help but laugh at that. His confidence really was unmatched. He looked over at you with a raised eyebrow.

“Probably,” you admitted, given enough time. You considered something for a moment. “Do you have any idea what you’ve thrown yourself into, in your pursuit of me? This is not some corporate war; it could get us both killed.”

“I made the decision to marry you having considered that extensively.”

You weren’t sure about much else in that conversation, but you liked to think that if nothing else, this was as close as Seto Kaiba would come to admitting that he cared for you, in his own way. You did wonder though what had possessed him to willingly enter this arrangement, knowing the dangers—even more than you. In your eyes, no beauty could ever be worth knowingly launching into a war.

...

You must have fallen asleep sometime after that conversation, because you were gently shaken awake by Seto, leaning on the passenger side door. You vaguely registered that you were parked in front of the manor’s main doors.

“The microchip, where is it?” It took you a moment to process his question.

“What for?”

“I want to have it analyzed, to make sure it’s not one of Kaiba Corp.’s”

You looked over at the time flashing on the car dash, it read four seventeen.

“Who do you have working there at this ungodly hour?”

“I am more than capable of doing it myself.” Right. Of course.

You were still to recover from your sleeping state so you barely registered retrieving the chip from the bedroom. When you slipped back into the car, you could tell Seto was studying your face, most likely your now very conspicuous dark circles.

“You don’t need to come, go get some sleep,” he advised, but you weren’t about to have this play out like some Asian drama, where evidence and critical information gets manipulated or lost in translation somewhere in the process in the character’s absence. Not that you didn’t trust Seto, you just trusted your own presence a little more.

“I’d rather come,” you insisted.
He undid his seatbelt, and you had half expected him to throw you out, but instead he leaned over and reached for your own seatbelt, his face a hair’s breadth away from your own. You could feel his breath falling against your ear as he pulled on the seatbelt. His face held a neutral expression, blue eyes seemingly unfeeling as they glided over you, but you could feel crimson spilling into your cheeks.

You didn’t know why it affected you so deeply. You had woken up to this man, much closer to this man a many number of times and yet perhaps it was the location of his unexpected act that had impacted your sensibility. Not that you expected him to do something rash like take you right there in his car, but the implication of such an act, to your severely sleep deprived mind was probably what had made it feel so erotic.

“What’s with you, you look like you’ve come down with a fever.”

You snapped your head around at him to see he was starting up the car, your hands lifted to feel the seatbelt stretched across your body.

“I’m fine,” you declared, placing the backs of your hands on your burning cheeks. You shifted your gaze surreptitiously, to observe the smirk slowly spreading across his lips. The bastard, he knew. Damn his pheromones.

“You should focus on healing your body faster, and I’ll gladly oblige, right now I’m afraid you might break,” he abruptly stated, and he didn’t need to finish that sentence for you to understand the other, incredibly suggestive half that hung unspoken in the air. His devilish smirk and the glance he threw your way was enough to infer his intentions.

…”

Walking through Kaiba Corp. while it was completely deserted was bone chilling. The lights seemed to be motion sensitive as they turned on as you walked past, but the seemingly endless, unlit corridor that stretched before you was very unnerving. Your arm that was snaked around your husband’s arm tightened unconsciously and you failed to notice him looking over at you slightly concerned over the collar of his navy trench coat.

“No offence, but your company looks like a dungeon,” you spoke without thinking. “It’s hideous.” You realized that you had only really seen the research and development’s hallway so far, but regardless, it was all dark metal and hospital lights. You would admit that it did have some futuristic aspects to the design but unsettling nonetheless.

“Are you suggesting that my company is not up to your standards?”

“No, I suppose it has its own apocalyptic charm to it.” That didn’t sit well with him.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” he snapped

“It means that it looks like the lair of some evil inventor, or in nicer words, you need a better interior decorator. Take it with a grain of salt.”

You heard him make ‘hmph,’ sound at the back of his throat in response, seemingly displeased with your humour.
You sat on an uncomfortably tall stool in one of the labs as Seto picked apart the microchip under a some glorified microscope. You fell into reading some article on your phone distractedly for a while before you heard him speak.

“It’s not the same,” he declared.

“What isn’t?”

He went on to explain how the alloys in the circuit or some other component were not something Kaiba Corp. would use or something to that effect.

“As advanced as this thing is, it’s not ours.” All you salvaged from that explanation was that Kaiba Corp. had no hand in making that gadget and that it probably came out of your own lab.

He put the chip back in the plastic bag you had kept it in previously and handed it back to you.

“Do you mind dropping that Kaiba Corp. version in here too?”

“You don’t trust me?”

“No I like to have evidence before I go demolish the self-esteem of people that work for me,” you joked. The humour most likely going right over his head as he took your words literally, given that’s exactly what he was known for. “Are you scared I’m stealing company secrets? Don’t be, this whole marriage was supposed to be a merger without the hostility. I’m sure we’ll be sharing information a lot more confidential than some alloy of a microchip.”

“That’s not what I’m afraid of,” he declared with a scowl on his face, as he dropped the similar chip into the bag with a pair of tweezers.

You stuck the bag back in the pocket of your blush denim skirt, before following him out of the lab.

By the time you made it up to his office, it was almost sunrise. You watched through the wall of glass at the white gold linings that threatened to spill out of the grey clouds that blanketed Domino. The sky was painted an unlit light blue, with a soft light breaking through the horizon, and yet there was a certain gloominess which felt strangely comforting. You were in awe. Seto’s office was about as high as yours was, so you contemplated turning your own desk around to face the glass wall instead of facing your office doors. How many sunrises like this one must you have missed buried in paperwork?

You were so captivated by the sight that you hadn’t notice Seto looking over you with a similar look of fascination.

“Is it that interesting to you?” you heard him ask, sitting on the edge of his desk, arms crossed.

“How can someone not be?” you absentmindedly replied, refusing to break your gaze.

“That’s hardly the most suitable place to watch that,” he declared. You almost asked him what he had meant, before you felt his hand encircling your wrist as he pulled you out of the office.

Unable to keep up with his pace, you almost tripped over your heels as he rushed up the stairs that led to the roof.

Throwing open the door to the roof; he released your hand, gently pushing you forward towards the centre.
You rushed forward, leaning your hands on the edge, slightly raising yourself on your toes, as if you couldn’t see enough of the sparsely lit blue sky as it was. The Kaiba Corp. building rose so high that it was overlooking the clouds, and with the exception of a couple of other buildings in the distance breaking through the clouds like your own, the entire city of Domino lay far, far below you. Embraced by the crisp morning air, you looked on at the sleeping city below you, only visible through occasional breaks in the clouds, resembling toy structures, under the white that stretched for miles into the blue mountains in the distance. Except for the cold wind sweeping past you, you were detached from all noise and all the commotion of your daily life. It was peaceful and you felt no matter how wide you opened your eyes; you couldn’t be present enough to absorb the surreal atmosphere. There was something so indescribably beautiful in the morning light, a mixture of greyness and gold, a gloomy brightness that co-existed so perfectly.

“Do you ever come up here?” you asked as Seto approached you.

“Rarely,” he stated, quite flatly.

“It’s a shame, this is breathtaking!” you exclaimed excitedly, contrasting his rather stony disposition.

“I would imagine your building afforded the same view.”

“I’m sure, I’ve just never thought of going up there at this time of day.”

“You know, for an artist, you’re not very creative.”

That comment earned him a glare, before you occupied yourself again with looking at the scenery that unfolded before you in amazement.

“You remind me of my brother sometimes,” he declared, standing next to you, seemingly unimpressed. As you looked over at him, trench coat billowing in the wind behind him, and his hair blowing in an unruly manner about his fair-skinned face, you hoped that the tone of endearment you had heard was not imagined.

…

You woke up feeling your neck was positioned at a right angle. You could smell the scent of your husband embracing you. You opened your eyes to a room you were not familiar with. Daylight was pouring in through a wall of glass across the room from you. It was then you realized that you were in Seto’s office, laying on the grey set of sofas that were on the far end of the room from his desk, near the door. You looked down to see his navy trench coat draped over you, before your eyes looked up to him working at his desk, just wearing the jade green dress shirt he had been wearing underneath. You tried to recall when you had fallen asleep.

You were about to ask him how you had gotten there when the door a few feet away from you opened without warning and that blonde woman walked in, what was her name, Sasaki? You raised an eyebrow as she swayed her hips a degree too much for your liking as she walked with those stilettos up to Seto’s desk. Seto didn’t even bother sparing her a look, as he continued to glare at his computer. You were sure she hadn’t noticed your presence yet. Partially irritated, partially amused by her, you looked on as she addressed him.

“Sir, your breakfast is here,” she informed, dragging her words in a way that made you
uncomfortable, as she leaned over a tad too far.

“It’s not for me,” he began to say before your phone rang, gaining both their attention.

You answered to one of your own secretaries losing her mind about a meeting you were late for with some foreign chief executive officer who had shown up early, never a dull moment.

“How could you let me sleep here for this long?” you asked Seto accusingly, frantically swinging your legs off the side of the sofa as you tried to find your heels. The assistant looked slightly petrified by your presence and what you were sure was your current position under her boss’s trench coat.

“You didn’t get any sleep last night,” he answered blankly. “Eat this before you go,” he pointed to the parcel Sasaki had put down on his desk.

“I’ll grab a coffee on my way, also I’m burrowing your car” you tried to dismiss the topic of breakfast, you had no time.

“You need to take your medicine, and you’re not supposed to be drinking coffee,” he declared visibly irritated. “You can leave now,” he then barked, turning to his gawking assistant.

So you scarfed down a sandwich, standing at his desk, choking a couple of times before grabbing the car keys he had laid out on his desk for you and running out the door, promising to take your medicine once you were in your office.

…

“Get me the files on all the members of the board,” you told your assistant the moment you got into the office after the meeting.

“Ma’am?”

“Did I stutter? The files, background information, everything we have of my director board, get it in my inbox.”

You were going to find the rat or multiple rats running around in your circle. You had your suspicions and wanted to confirm them before completely annihilating them.

“This is why they say one bad orange spoils the whole box,” you muttered to yourself as your assistant came back into the office with a box of files. You applied pressure on your left eye with the tips of your fingers at the sight. “How is it that we haven’t digitized any of these files?”

You inquired irritated.

“These are the files of the members that have been serving on the board since the company was launched or for quite a while now. They have files on the server, but you asked for all the information we have so – ”

“Understood, also, have Miyuki Matsumoto sent up to my office. You’re dismissed.” Your assistant bowed as he exited your office.

Miyuki was fresh blood from the Internal Auditing department of your corporation. She was in her
mid-twenties, fresh out of university and you had hired her yourself. She was sharp and incredibly efficient and most importantly, hadn’t been in the company long enough to be manipulated by the old timers.

You pushed back at your eyes with your fingertips at the headache that was forming.

As Miyuki arrived in your office, you had narrowed the files down to three people. These people had either strongly suggested the idea of marriage to you initially, or not expressed much enthusiasm towards your marriage to Seto Kaiba later on, despite agreeing to the idea, and generally you just hated them.

“Uyeda Nakamura, chief director of the board, Yamamura Kazunori, legal director, Ogata Genjo, director of communications,” you read out to her, “I need you to find everything you can on these three board members, personal connections, phone records, who they play golf with on the weekends, everything. Do you understand what I’m getting at here?”

“Yes, what am I looking for exactly?” she questioned, her phone out ready to take notes.

“Follow them, anything out of the ordinary will do, corruption, bribery, conflicts of interest, but particularly, find out what relations any of them may have with the former board of the Kodama gaming corporation or anyone even remotely related to them. Also, I’ll give you access to the files of the other board members and a few members of the legal team, keep an eye on them as well.”

You were basically putting anyone aware of the marriage under your suspicion. “Most importantly, this cannot be disclosed to anyone else in or outside of this corporation, regardless of their level of clearance.”

“Understood.”

“Miyuki,” you called out to her, as she stood up to leave, “this will be dangerous, you’re putting your life on the line with this investigation, I want you to tell me if you want to refuse this assignment. I understand if you do not want to do this.”

“If I didn’t enjoy this line of work, I would have taken up your offer to become an actress when you did,” she reassured as she excused herself.

…

As you were changing that night, the plastic bag containing the microchips fell out of our skirt pocket. You made a note to yourself to pay your lab on a visit on Monday before slipping into bed.

You lay there, staring up at the dimly lit ceiling, staring at the spot your bullet from the night before was lodged.

“I’ll have someone remove that tomorrow,” you heard Seto’s voice as he emerged through the bedroom door, returning from his study.

“You didn’t get any sleep because of me last night. Also, I’m just sorry about last night in general,” you apologized, feeling the weight of what you did sinking in.

“I didn’t do a good enough job of explaining myself to you,” he spoke in a dismissive tone as he joined you on the bed. “You’re overthinking again,” he added.
“Perhaps I am. How did I end up in your office this morning?” you asked remembering.

“You fell asleep leaning on the ledge of the roof.”

“Oh. And you carried me?”

“How else do you figure you got to my office?”

There was a sense of familiarity in these conversations now, and you found comfort in these arguments, if you could call them that, about trivial, routinely matters. The man next to you was still shrouded in a veil of mystery, and yet he was an enigma that you increasingly found yourself wanting to unravel.

You slowly moved closer to him under the sheets, hesitantly placing your head on his shoulder, resting your face against the bare skin of his neck. He didn’t stiffen, or dispute your actions, simply pulling his hand from under your back, and wrapping it around you. He seemed to find you a lot more comfortable than you were with him.

“I won’t let them touch you,” you heard his rough voice break through the silence. You could feel his voice reverberating in his chest under your arm.

“What?”

“Earlier, you asked me if I knew whether this could get both of us killed. I won’t let them touch us.”
I wanted to write a character who wouldn't bend and comply to all of Kaiba's unfeeling disposition and yet erratic mood swings stemming from his control-freak nature. I wrote the character as possessing the ability to be less understanding, slightly more selfish and much more emotionally demanding than Kaiba, just to keep things interesting. I thought it would be interesting to see a character who gave back his own medicine in a much worse form, without being too similar to him. I just wanted to clarify that before any of you become confused.

This chapter really explores the nitty-gritty emotional hell of the relationship.

The reader has a way of progressing away from the relationship as fast as she progresses into it so that it's been difficult to write and keep up with.

If Kaiba does have deeper feelings for her, the reader is just not feeling it.

I tried to put Kaiba's perspective in here at first but decided that it would be better to reserve that for a perhaps more devastating chapter.

*Edit: When I mean devastating, I really do just mean one where Kaiba is being unnecessarily elusive.

You woke up to the sensation of a damp warmness against your forehead and the greater part of your face. It wasn’t wet, just felt very humid, which in the air-conditioned room, you found very odd. Your eyes half open, you became aware that your face was pressed against bare skin, hence the sweaty sensation. You pulled away slightly from your place against his neck to look up at blue eyes staring back at you through a mess of chocolate locks. He tilted his head forward, gently taking your lips in his. Your fingers curled tightly against what you realized was his bare chest at the sensation of his moist lips against yours.

There were worse things to wake up to than being kissed by Seto Kaiba. The man was nothing short of a piece of art, he was absolutely gorgeous.

That being said though, you were quite surprised by this affection –if you could call it that given the person in question – considering the events that had transpired over the weekend. Seto had gone to work on Saturday and you had been away for the greater part of the weekend, including Saturday night, only to return a few hours ago, early into Monday morning. You had been away filming your new drama, as well as a commercial for a designer cosmetic and skin care brand you were endorsing, along with trying to catch up on your paperwork for your company. Seto had been less that pleased with your 'excursion,' as he had called it, or something to that effect, and when you explained that he would have to get used the idea of a woman who would at times be busier than him, well that had gone over about as well as a lead balloon.

Given the temper tantrum a few hours ago, you already knew that the next piece of news would be less than well received.
“I’m going away to Hunan for two weeks to film my drama.”

“What?” You heard him bark in your ear. That was about the reaction you were expecting.

“I’m going away to China to film the period piece I’m doing right now,” you reiterated slowly, as you took a deep breath.

“I heard you the first time.”

“Then why did you ask ‘what?’” you challenged him, a little tired of his, whatever this was called.

“When do you leave?” you finally heard him ask after a few moments had lapsed.

“Tomorrow, I’ll be back a few days before the Governor’s ball.”

You heard him growl in response against your ear.

…

Monday morning rush hour was a hideous, hideous sight. It had a way of bringing out the worst in people, including your husband. You could tell he was going to be terrorizing, and potentially firing departments’ worth of people by just observing the creases forming on his face with every moment spent idling in traffic at a standstill.

You began to wonder why you hadn’t driven yourself to work instead of choosing to endure this not-so-passive aggression. Sure you’d still be stuck in the same predicament, most likely right behind him, but at least you’d be blasting K-pop or J-pop or something to drown out the irritation.

You briefly contemplated asking him if he ever got tired of wearing that same expression, and then decided against it so as to not aggravate the beast further.

…

When you finally arrived at your gaming company, Kodama Gaming Corp. it was actually you that ended up doing the terrorizing, though at first, not intentionally. It was the first time that you had visited the building after the take-over, and you learnt that your grandfather was about as terrifying as your husband; leading to the employees to fear your wrath the same way they had his. The poor souls were so traumatized by your presence that they could barely bring themselves to speak, and all you had done so far was walk in through the lobby up to research and development. Apparently an unannounced visit from the CEO meant certain doom. It was the most peculiar thing to you, but you wouldn’t deny that you were enjoying the power trip greatly.

Though perhaps, it was your second course of action that really engrained that fear into the minds of your employees in your image. All you had asked was simply why the lab had failed to notice that the microchip you had Seto analyze wasn’t standard Kaiba Corp. edition, and the head of the department had the nerve to tell you that Kaiba Corp. had made a mistake and to have it reanalyzed there. Quite frankly, you trusted Seto’s word over his and you just weren’t here for his laziness and
insubordination first thing Monday morning.
You had thrown the other chip at his eye and demanded it be re-done, ordering to know when and why the component that was in the original chip was discontinued from the lab, and to make a report with all the devices that component was included in before it was taken off inventory.

They would have your requested list of materials compiled by the end of the day.

…

When you walked into Seto’s office that evening, it was around seven. There wouldn’t be really any meetings this time of day so you walked past his secretaries and through his door without knocking and no one made an attempt to stop you.

He looked up at you from his paperwork, cerulean eyes scanning your form, his expression read as if you being in his office around seven on a Monday night was the most normal thing ever.

“That colour looks good on you,” he noted as his eyes returned to the papers in front of him. You looked down at your baby blue dress which fell around the ankles, with cap sleeves and a deep, kimono style neck, tied at the waist in a bow, the choice of dress wasn’t intentional. You had changed from the red blazer dress you had on earlier that morning because you had spilled coffee on it during lunch.

“I should wear it more of then,” you smiled, even though you figured he wasn’t looking, “truth be told, I’m not a huge fan of this colour.”

“You could stand to smile like that more often too,” he added. The comment came out sounding as if he was sneering at you, given the tone of voice, but you understood he was trying to be more attentive. No one had ever really asked you to smile before, except when you were in front of the camera posing, so the comment was very touching, regardless of how he had meant it.

“You aren’t going to ask why I’m here?” you inquired as you took a seat in front of his desk.

“I didn’t realize you needed a reason to be,” he responded without missing a beat, and not looking away from his paperwork. You raised an eyebrow, was that supposed to be a compliment? You were torn between interpreting that as his way of stating that you were idle enough to wander into his office at any given time and your reasons therefore were unimportant, or whether his office was accessible to you at any time and didn’t need to explain your reasons to him when you visited. You had missed him studying your expression again. “I meant my office wasn’t off-limits to you. You don’t need to explain yourself for being here.”

The man was a mind reader, you were sure of it.

“I brought dinner,” you explained, holding up some Chinese takeout packages. In hindsight, it may have been an ill-advised choice bringing Chinese right before you left him to go to China for two weeks but it was too late now.

“I’ll be right there,” he said distracted. You watched his concentration before concluding that if you were left in that state, you would never leave your seat, so you plucked the fountain pen out of his hands and gave him a pointed look.

“What is it with your obsession with craving normalcy?” he asked as he sat down on the sofa,
breaking apart his wooden chopsticks, as he eyed the spread of hole-in-the-wall Chinese restaurant food in front of him.

“Have you tried it before? What are you even talking about?”

“No I haven’t. I mean how you hate limos, fine dining restaurants and now this,” he stated almost with a hint of disdain.

“You come to a point in your life where decadence becomes suffocating. When there’s too much wrapping and ribbon, it becomes very inconvenient and difficult to experience the actual thing. I don’t like the hassle, plus, this tastes better than some French restaurant I can’t pronounce anyway.”

You fancied yourself very plain. You had grown up and lived your life in a very strict and controlled environment and those restrictions very quickly became too oppressive for your taste.

“You speak French.”

“I do, that doesn’t make the names any less difficult. I’m surprised you know that about me.” You really shouldn’t have been.

“I told you, I know more than you would think.”

While you highly doubted that, you changed the topic, asking him, “Do you not like Chinese?”

“I have no complaints about it.”

“The lab results came back for that microchip earlier,” you continued after a moment. “The component was discontinued months ago along with that particular model of the chip, but the actual device was a part of the AI project that I terminated upon taking over control of the company. My guess is that one of the removed board members took one with them as a parting gift.”

You watched him as his eyes stared intently at a blank spot on the wall, carefully calculating, you presumed the information you had just provided him.

“Why would you discontinue the AI project? I heard your company was making remarkable strides.”

That was true, Kodama Gaming was rumoured to have advanced past Kaiba Corp. even in their state of falling from grace.

“That’s what you’re curious about? There are just certain things in nature that you don’t mess with.”

“I didn’t realize you were religious.”

“Hardly,” you scoffed, “I’m not. I got to the shrine a few times a year but that’s usually for things like praying for success on my acting projects and such, not spirituality.”

You heard him making a low humming sound with the back of his throat in some sort of understanding. You knew he disagreed quite strongly with your sentiments, and you worried somewhat about what would happen when the two companies were officially merged and Kaiba Corp. insisted on advancing AI technology.

You spent the rest of the night memorizing your script, curled up on the sofa in Seto’s office while
You were taking a commercial flight to China with the rest of the cast and crew, and the fans had come by the thousands to the airport to try to meet all of you and see you off. Getting from the check-in desk to the gate was a circus. There were so many people pushing gifts on to you and trying to touch you that even security was overwhelmed. You were holding things in your hand that you had no idea what they were, as you were pushed through the sea of fans by security.

When you finally got to the lounge before security check-ins, you handed off the gifts to your personal assistant, who was acting as your manager for this trip. You were giving her the last of the presents you had received from the fans – some kind of plush animal in a box – when a rectangular card fell at your feet.

You picked up the purple card to notice a violet and a white flower resembling a magnolia, seemingly drawn by a child. Instantly drawing the connection between the symbols and the flower bouquet on your desk a few nights ago, you broke out in a cold sweat as you flipped the card to see if anything was written on the other side. There was a picture of a poorly drawn blue dragon… a blue eyes white dragon.

You could feel your blood running cold, your heartbeat rising to your throat as your mind deciphered what message it was trying to convey.

Seto, they were after Seto. Your rationality reminded you that he was more than capable of taking care of himself and you rushing to his side wouldn’t change anything but you could feel your composure slipping as you frantically dialled his number.

It rang twice before he picked up.

“Seto!” you interrupted him, panic evident in your voice, before he had a chance to even answer.

“Where are you?”

“You just saw me, I’m driving back from the airport, are you alright?” he sounded annoyed at your panic-stricken state but also fairly concerned.

“They’re after you – I got a note, it was the same as the flowers on my desk I – it had your dragon on it, I’m sure – ” You weren’t making much sense, even to yourself, but you had so much to pass on before you had to board your flight that you couldn’t help it.

“You’re not making any sense,” he interrupted you, “Calm down and say it again.” The steadiness in his voice was reassuring to a certain degree, as you explained everything from the flowers to the note at your desk to the symbols drawn on this card and how it involved him. “Don’t worry about me,” he assured, after a few moments of letting your words sink in, “this is not exactly an unexpected development. I knew those goons would be after me sooner or later. People are trying to kill me all the time, ask them to get in line. Is it safe for you to be in China right now?”

“Yes, I have connections,” you stated, referring to Soryu, whose base was in China. You didn’t think they would follow you to China to complicate things over the border; you were actually just concerned about Seto. And what the hell was that about people wanting to kill him all the time?
They say the heart grows fonder with distance. Seventeen hundred miles away from home, stranded in the jungle with nothing but mountains all around, this really seemed to be the case. There seemed to be a space where his arm usually rested on your waist at night and your pillow didn’t feel as comfortable as the crook of his shoulder.

You hadn’t spoken to him since you landed in the airport.

The traditional attire was heavy and humid to be in all day, you were completely removed from civilization with no internet or phone connections and with every free moment all your mind seemed to wander back to was his eyes and the image of coming home to him. You felt a mixture of irritation at the dependency and fondness at the recollection.

Each time your team travelled to one of the old towns in the distance, you spent your entire time trying to find a phone that worked. Despite fully knowing that there would be none that could make long distance calls.

You hadn’t spoken to him in two weeks and his absence caused you to slowly slip into a state of despondency.

You had started noticing the strangest details; how he was much taller and remarkably more handsome compared to even your ‘heart-throb,’ co-stars, how his presence felt more stimulating, how he could hold by far, a much more intellectually engaging conversation than these people, though perhaps that comparison was too insulting to his superior intellect.

Perhaps worst still, the state of affairs that you had left him in, left you ridden with anxiety. There was a suffocating heaviness that you felt each time your chest rose to breath and you couldn’t help but fear whether his involvement with you would ultimately hurt him greatly. You felt responsible and yet selfishly, you feared the emptiness you would feel if you lost him, and childishly, you wanted to protect him.

In a testament to the amount of time you were stuck in the middle of nowhere—not to take away from the scenery which was breathtaking or the culture—your bruises had completely healed, with the exception of the one on your leg, which still had faint traces of blue and purple left.

At the end of the shooting in Hunan, unexpectedly, you were offered to be the ambassador for Dolce and Gabbana’s perfume launch campaign in Asia. This extended your trip a few extra days and took you to Beijing.

You had called Seto to explain the change of plans and he had been seemingly indifferent to it, though from his clipped responses and his tone of voice, his displeasure at the extension was most evident. It couldn’t be helped, this was your career, and you wouldn’t make it second best to your marriage, you couldn’t.

Not to say that he wouldn’t understand, he wouldn’t even admit that he cared or that there was an unspoken issue in your relationship about your work, in order for you two to arrive at a point to discuss whether or not he could be understanding going forward. There was a very clear rip forming in your relationship, and following the mere minute and half phone conversation you had had with him after over two weeks of being entirely disconnected, he had resorted to not answering...
your phone calls.

At first, you had fallen into a state of anger, before slowly beginning to worry about his wellbeing. Was he not answering your phone calls because he chose not to, or because he was not in a position to? Was he safe?

You wouldn’t deny that the distant corners of your mind had also wandered towards the possibility that he had become involved with someone else or that all his affection for you was superficial and easily forgotten in your absence. Subconsciously, cracks began to run through the relationship without you even realizing.

You had no former experience on how relationships were supposed to be. Was it normal for him to ignore you and be indifferent to your absence for this long a period of time? You couldn’t gage what you were feeling. You couldn’t know if you were overreacting. Were your feelings unrequited, you wondered, because if so, you would have no issue in removing whatever affections you had grown for him too.

Your anxiety overwhelmed you, until you felt you could only breathe if you were running in his direction. You wrapped up your campaign a day earlier than scheduled, flying back to Japan still in the same hair and makeup you had shot the campaign in; your face was flushed and your hair had the illusion of being freshly washed and barely dried, with strands plastered to your face. A look that was most appropriate in your overwrought condition.

You ran down the staircase he had led you up weeks before to show you the sunrise and down the corridor which led to his office.

You burst through the double doors without even bothering to knock – civility was beyond you at this point – eyes desperately searching for Seto in the vast room. Your eyes landed on his navy trench clad figure, sitting at his desk, through his two assistants briefing him about something across from him. Your rather loud and discourteous entrance had gained all three of their attention quite…effectively.

The moment you saw him alive and well, you slightly fell back against the grand doors, taking a deep breath to stabilize yourself and regain whatever you could possibly salvage of your composure.

In the presence of your current audience, your pride converted all your pent up anxiety into anger.

“Get out, the both of you,” you ordered. The two of them stood frozen in place, mid-sentence with Seto, looking back at him for confirmation. “Do you not comprehend basic Japanese? I said get out,” you snarled.

The blonde one began saying something back to you when Seto interrupted her.

“Leave, lock the doors behind you.”

For a moment you had wondered if he had referred to you until he threw the file in his hand on his desk.

What he had meant with the second half of his sentence was lost to you.

The two assistants walked past you on either side, exiting the room as you locked the door as he had asked.

You walked up to his desk, unable to find a proper expression to wear in order to match your
current emotional distress, settling on a completely unfeeling one which reflected his own.

“You didn’t answer my calls,” you began monotonously as you reached his desk. “As busy as a man might be, out of the twenty-four hours in your day, couldn’t you-” You were rambling, so you cut yourself off, sighing.

You had confirmed what you had come to confirm, you told yourself, he looks quite well so let’s leave now without embarrassing yourself.

“You look well,” you told him, in an incredibly formal tone to mask the remnants from the outburst that had almost come through. “I just wanted to know. Now, if you’d excuse me,” and with that you turned on your heel.

You heard him call out your name behind you.

“Come here,” he spoke frustrated. You couldn’t see him but if you could, you knew he would be pinching the bridge of his nose with his fingers. You refused to look at him.

“I came to see you all the way from China. Why don’t you walk the two steps and learn to meet me halfway in this relationship for once,” you snapped, your tone increasingly becoming more irritable, not really sure entirely where this was coming from.

“You’re being difficult.”

“Yes, I’m always being difficult!” you spun around, though not taking a step towards him. “It’s always me! Me, the child, always inconveniencing your highness, your grace!” you screamed, your voice reaching pitch which threatened to crack. “Weren’t you even worried about me? Did you not miss me?” you questioned, your voice softening, but managing to maintain your accusing tone. He abruptly stood up from his chair, walking around his desk while you were in mid-sentence. “We haven’t seen each other in two weeks!” He strode up to you, placing his hands on either side of your face, forcefully placing his lips over yours as he towered over you.

He picked you up, forcing you to instinctively wrap your legs around his waist.

“You’ve deprived me,” he growled huskily, carrying around his desk, sitting you down on it, as he kicked his chair aside. “Make up for it,” he demanded as he trailed his lips roughly down your neck, expertly biting down on your sensitive spots, eliciting moans from you as you were forced to throw your head back.

You hated how much you had missed his touch.

“You make it sound like we have sex every day,”

“No, but knowing that I can if I really wanted to gets me by,” he panted.

He laid you down over his paperwork, leaning over you, tracing his lips down to your collarbones, nipping at them sharply. His lips not leaving your chest, he slowly pushed the overlapping ‘V’ neck of your dress past your shoulders, the long sleeves gathering at the crook of your elbows. The cut of the neckline hadn’t allowed for a bra to be worn underneath.

He pulled back, his expression was icy but his eyes held desire unlike you’ve ever seen before as he took you in. If nothing else, they told you that he indeed had been deprived, at least for physical pleasure, you hadn’t been replaced.

His mouth travelled down to your breast, his tongue tantalizingly circling against your hardening
nipple. His hands traced down your clothes arms down to your wrists, before his fingertips began to brush against your inner thigh, slowly beginning to massage them.

You let out a strained moan at the combined sensation of his lips against your nipple and his fingers against your underwear. Your hands found their way up to his hair, gripping at the silky locks, as your back arched into him.

His lips travelled back up to yours. “That’s my girl,” he spoke roughly in between uneven breaths, lips brushing against yours. You couldn’t begin to comprehend the electricity that pulsed through you as his fingers pushed further against the lace of your underwear without warning. Your eyes closed, a loud moan escaped your lips before you could stop yourself, echoing across the empty office, fingers tightening around his hair. “They can hear you outside,” he taunted you as he began sucking on your other nipple, one hand travelling up to make up the lack of attention on the first breast.

This only stood to turn you on more, wetness spilling out of you to meet his fingertips.

His fingers alternatively dove through the fabric into you. The lace was depriving you of the complete pleasure of him inside you, but for someone that has never known the sensation, this was enough to send you over the edge.

You moaned his name loudly, lost in the euphoria. You imagined how overwhelmed you would be when not his fingers, but he actually entered you, if the mere touch of his hands affected you so strongly.

He took off his coat and you supported yourself on your elbows to meet his lips again. You began unbuttoning his shirt when his phone began ringing. At first, both of you ignored it, too caught up in the heat of the moment, but its incessant ringing became too distracting.

Seto went to pick it up and hang up on whoever right away, but you asked him to answer it. Still standing between your legs, the conversation was beginning to take so long to the point where you ended up slipping your dress back on again, and pulling yourself down from his desk.

“We’ll finish this at home,” he stated, covering the receiver, and you nodded to him as you composed yourself again, leaving him to his work.

You should have been happy at the welcome you had received but all you felt was a sinking feeling.

The time never came to finish your earlier endeavor at home, neither of you could seem to find the right timing or atmosphere for it as yet again another weekend passed by with both of you thoroughly immersed in work.

…

Distance makes the heart grow fonder they say. Distance also reveals much about a relationship.

You wouldn’t acknowledge it directly, but his behaviour over the course of the past two weeks had left much to be desired of his attitude towards you. You felt his affections were purely physical and you questioned his emotional sincerity. You shouldn’t have. This was after all, an arranged marriage, but you were sick of hiding behind that excuse.
Emotionally, you wouldn’t deny that you were beginning to grow attached to him, but you were selfish, that’s how you had survived in this industry as long as you have, and if he wasn’t going to give you what you wanted, you would deprive him equally.

You called your assistant to your office early Monday morning.

Currently you held 54% of the company’s stocks, with the board members holding 31% collectively and the other 15% being publicly traded.

“Start buying as many stocks as you can in my name. Do it discreetly,” you advised her. You were going to gain enough control of this corporation that your decisions couldn’t be influenced. “Also, find me an external lawyer not associated with Kaiba Corp. or this conglomerate that specializes in inheritance and writing a last will.”

She looked at you a little taken a back, though surely concealing the full extent of her shock as she received your rather consequential orders.

You wouldn’t be his doll anymore if that’s what he had taken you for. You would annul this marriage and find a way to walk away unscathed if it came to it.

Chapter End Notes

Quick note about stocks, I don't keep up with stocks so I don't know how many shares need to be in public trading to be considered acceptable but for the sake of this story, please let's just go with it!

Let me know what you think :)


You rolled over to see him already staring back at you with his head resting on his arm. Eyes as clear as the sea were the first things you saw this morning. You felt a knot tightening in your stomach. His other arm reached out to touch you but you pulled away, slipping away from the sheets.

“I have a meeting,” you rejected him as you walked to the bathroom.

You weren’t about to fall into a pit less chasm if he wasn’t going to be there to catch you. Your heart was truly a hysterical creature with no leash. You had woken up to find that you loved him and to know that it wasn’t reciprocated, and yet be forced to wake up to him every morning would be nothing short of torture.

You would deprive yourself of him until you had forgotten.

Perhaps you heard the word ‘goddess,’ being used one too many times to describe you and hoped that maybe he would see you with more affection.

You felt him wrap his arms around you, his bare chest pushing against your back as you reached for your toothbrush, his lips pressing against your earlobe. You didn’t reject him, choosing to ignore him as you proceeded to brush your teeth, but good lord was it difficult resisting that man as he pinned himself against you.

You reminded yourself that his affections were purely physical and that he wouldn’t want you at your first wrinkle.

Tonight was the Governor’s Ball and you had intentionally chosen to wear a bright scarlet gown to contrast his colour of choice. The criss-crossed, barely off the shoulder dress hung on a hanger at the far center of the closet, cascading to the ground in a flurry of decadent lace and embroidery, pooling around the floor.

“Are you particularly attracted to red?” you heard him ask from the walk-in closet as he looked over at you.

You were wearing a ruby coloured, cape dress this morning too.

“It just matches my lipstick,” you responded vaguely, running your fingers through your hair to the ends, letting it drape around one shoulder.

You heard him make a sort of groaning sound in response as you walked back into pick up your nude Louboutin stilettos from beside him.

You watched him button up his dress shirt before pulling on the watch you had given him and for
some reason the gesture sickened you. He had a million other watches that he never wore, why did he insist on wearing this one. Why had you picked one that matched practically his entire wardrobe?

Your phone rang; it was Miyuki from internal auditing.

“I have some intel,” she reported. You looked at your own watch, it was barely seven in the morning – the girl was good.

“Meet me in a café, I don’t want anyone seeing us together. I’ll send you the address,” you informed her, you had meant within the company where there were prying eyes.

“Who was that?” Seto’s voice suddenly emerged from the closet behind you.

“Internal Auditing, I’m weeding out my board like you had asked,” you informed him plainly. You had missed the undertone of jealousy in his previous sentence.

“Wise decision.”

You hated his patronization.

…

“From what I’ve gathered,” Miyuki informed you, as the two of you sat huddled in a small café on the far side of town. “I don’t believe it was either one of the three directors that brought on the idea of your marriage. Uchimura Hyobe, director of Human Resources, he plays golf with quite a few of the ex-board members from Kodama Gaming, notably Egusa Sotatsu –”

“Former director of research and development,” you interrupted.

“Yes. According to my intelligence, it’s more likely that director Hyobe brought on the idea and encouraged the chief of your board, along with the other members you mentioned to suggest and popularize the idea of an arranged marriage.” She placed several sets of photographs as evidence on the coffee table.

You had remembered Hyobe remaining silent throughout the entirety of your marriage contract finalization process with Seto. Though as he was a fairly new member of the board and often reserved, preferring to keep to himself, you had made nothing of it. It was a rookie mistake.

It made sense, especially if the link was Sotatsu, the former director or research and development, with regards to the fact of the microchip as it would have been easy for him to smuggle, or rather just take that kind of technology and walk out of the lab, given his level of clearance.

“Good work. Keep me updated.”

“There’s more. There seems to be a shared locker at the golf course that seems to be receiving a lot of attention. I suspect bribery or the exchange of other valuables.”

“I see, keep an eye out on that. Look forward to receiving a pay increase. I won’t give you a promotion so as to not increase suspicions, but you’ll have the same level of clearance as your department head. Continue working as my mole. Don’t get caught.” You stood to leave before she
called out to you.

“I didn’t expect anything in return!” she protested.

“No, but hard work will be rewarded in my company and insubordination eliminated,” you shot back a sincere smile which still conveyed authority as you discreetly slipped out of the coffee shop and into your car.

…

You arrived back at the mansion with your hair and makeup already done. Your hair was in a low bun at the base of your neck, a hairband like jeweled, gold diadem set on your crown. Your makeup was more forward than when you had attended the charity gala, opting for a bold red lip and dark winged eyes.

You clasped your diamond encrusted necklace that cascaded between your collarbones, around your neck as you stepped out of your ruby, cape dress, in your black lingerie. You unclasped your bra, letting it drop to the floor as you reached out to the red dress hanging in front of you, but a pair of arms wrapping around your bare waist pulled you back, sending chills down your spine at the touch.

You felt him breathing in your scent as he placed his lips against your temple.

“We’re going to be late,” you reminded him. He ignored you, continuing to stand behind you, arms wrapped around you. You stood stiffly, trying your best to ignore his scent that was drowning your senses.

He spun you around, lifting you against his waist as if you were the lightest thing in the world.

“I don’t care, I waited all day for this,” he breathed, against your ear. He was still in his suit from that morning. You wouldn’t relax against his touch, you wouldn’t allow yourself to. He pushed you against a wall and trailed kisses against your neck for a few moments before he let you down.

You watched him slip on the suit jacket of his white tuxedo. He asked you to tie the bow that would sit at the collar.

You could feel his breath falling against your hairline as you fumbled with the silk strip of fabric against his neck. You could feel your fingers shaking slightly as he watched you intently while you managed to knot it into a perfect bow.

…

The Governor’s Ball was one of the most formal and high profile affairs of spring for the Japanese elite, second only to the Imperial Ball, hosted by the royal family. The Governor’s ball was hosted by a different, high ranking minister each year and was mainly attended by distinguished officials, dignitaries, both foreign and Japanese, along with well-respected businessmen and women. As such, the demographic tended to be generally much older than the two of you. In fact, if you
remembered correctly, last year, you and Seto were the only individuals below forty-something that had attended the ball. The two of you still never acquainted yourselves but you did remember him being in attendance.

The ball, as always was held in Tokyo, and given the formality of the occasion; you would be taking a limo there.

As you stepped in to the limo, you didn’t notice Seto putting his hand over your head to prevent you from accidentally hitting your head against the car roof. He slipped in after you, sitting closer to you than you felt comfortable, his leg leaned against yours. You wanted to pull yourself away, but couldn’t find an inconspicuous enough way to do it without receiving his suspicions. You had learnt that he was very sensitive to things like that.

He focused intently on his phone for the majority of the drive there, which exceeded an hour, choosing to only exchange a few words with you.

You were slowly reaching your absolute limit.

…

The event was invitation only, and required a high level of security clearance to attend, and as such, besides the paparazzi at the gates, there were no media or press present within the confines of the ballroom or rest of the estate.

The invitation requested your company at ten o’clock, but hardly anyone showed up at the stroke of the hour, with the two of you reaching closer to eleven, after almost all the other guests had arrived.

You were greeted by the Minister hosting the event, joined by his wife at the door, before proceeding into the vast ballroom illuminated with the golden glow of the great chandeliers, for the sake of formality, your arm around Seto’s the entire time.

You spent the next while fraternizing with the other guests, almost all of them being much older than the two of you. The conversations mostly pertained to discussing the political and social climate of the country along with other state affairs, given that the majority of guests were politicians or of political background. Occasionally, the wife of a minister would gush about what a truly beautiful couple you were and how it was so refreshing to see among the other guests in attendance, which typically earned them an unimpressed glare from Seto.

You were momentarily occupied with picking up a glass of white wine from a server when you heard a man greet Seto in an English accent.

“Mr. Kaiba, pleasure to make your acquaintance,” the man introduced himself. You didn’t need to have heard that name or to be facing them to recognize that stiff British accent. You could feel your blood running cold.

You heard Seto return the greeting in perfect English, as was expected. If Seto had indeed researched you as extensively as he claims he did, there was no way he could not have known who he was.

You grimly turned around to face the man, who much to your displeasure, you were forced to call
your father. You weren’t aware he would be attending. He had never attended in the years prior. Of course, this wasn’t your first time seeing the man since your childhood; you had both attended a few of the same events over the years, but very tactically managed to avoid each other. You weren’t sure why he had suddenly decided to make an appearance in front of you after all these years.

He spoke your name, laced with disdain, acknowledging you.

“Mr. Kaiba, I heard you’re seeing my daughter,” he continued.

“I wasn’t aware you still considered her your daughter,” Seto snarled back at the British politician.

“Yes, well,” he cleared his throat, before turning his attention to the gaunt woman with dark ringlets of hair who joined your company in a sickly purple, taffeta dress. If your blood had run cold before, it was absolutely frozen in your veins now. “This is Merda, my wife,” your father introduced the woman to Seto.

“It’s an honour to meet you,” she held out a hand for Seto to shake, but he merely chose to stare it with disgust. She turned her attention to you at that, hatred evident in her glare, as she spoke in her high-pitched voice which distinctively reminded you of nails on a chalkboard. “I wonder what she’s said about us. You’ve always had a talent for seducing men much older than you since you were a child. What? Did the old man you ran away with die so you found yourself some younger blood?”

Your fingers unknowingly dug into Seto’s arm yours was snaked around, willing yourself to not give her the satisfaction of indulging her in your response.

Instead, you chose to maintain your composure by drowning her words out through taking a sip of your white wine. Seto’s arm shot out to yours as your glass neared your lips, lowering it back down, shooting you a look that read ‘what are you doing?’ Right, you weren’t supposed to drink alcohol.

“An illegitimate child out of wedlock? I suppose that’s fitting for you considering your birth. What a disgrace to the Kaiba name,” she snarled. Your father didn’t stop her, as always. Had she assumed you were pregnant because you couldn’t drink?

You thought it very unfortunate that your family’s dirty laundry was being unfolded in front of your husband, but if it couldn’t be helped, you would at least defend yourself. “That’s very rich coming from you, considering how you entered our household,” you shot back without missing a beat, having reached your limit. “My parents were married for over three years before I was born. Insult me all you please, but don’t you dare disgrace my mother that way. She was a dignified woman, one you could never hope to be, someone who doesn’t deserve your filthy mouth to dishonour her name!”

“You slut! How dare you talk down to me that way!” Her voice echoed through the ballroom along with the sound of flesh hitting flesh. You felt a sharp sting across your cheek as your neck harshly twisted sideways. You heard the music from the orchestra stop and everyone in the room turned to the source of the noise, falling into dead silence before exploding spontaneously into a whirlwind of hushed whispers around you. “You should have stayed locked in the basement where I left you! You utterly useless child!” she spat venomously as she stepped forward, in a quieter tone, for only you and Seto to hear.

You were positively mortified.
You couldn’t bring yourself to turn your face back to look at her. You felt something dripping down the corner of your lip, something wet.

In your state of shock, a small, scornful laugh left your lips.

“When you disrespect her that way, you’re directly dishonouring me. Touch her again with your filthy hand and I will not hesitate breaking it off!” you heard Seto threaten dangerously. You looked up to his arm blocking your step mother’s, which was raised in the air, ready to slap you again.

You could feel your head fall back again as you felt her push past your shoulders, your father following behind her. You couldn’t find it in yourself to raise it back up against the weight of the whispers swirling around you.

You felt fingers wrapping around your chin, forcing you to look up, as Seto produced a handkerchief you didn’t even know he carried, from an inner pocket of his suit jacket. He gently placed it against your bleeding lip, blotting at it, while his icy glare still prevailed across his features.

The stares from the guests as he did this were burdensome. You felt smothered.

You vaguely registered excusing yourself as you slipped away from his arm, willing your legs to move you through the crowd without giving away, towards the nearest balcony. You placed your hands over the stone railing, supporting your weight as you felt it falling, allowing your head to fall slowly towards the night sky, feeling the cool night air break against your stinging skin.

You felt Seto walk up beside you a few moments after.

“You’re none of the things she said you were,” you heard his rough voice contrasting the silence of the courtyard below you, having switched back to Japanese again. You tilted your head slightly to look at him.

“I know.”

You heard the orchestra playing again from inside the ballroom.

“You were never any of those things.” He confirmed.

You couldn’t bring yourself to agree to that. It would be too overwhelming in that moment for you to consider your sentiments about your past self.

You felt him step closer to you, placing an arm around you, as he looked down at you.

“I would be honoured if I could have a child with you someday. I assure you, our child wouldn’t be a shame to the Kaiba name,” his voice was extremely low. You lowered your head, closing your eyes. You didn’t know how he had known how deeply that comment had affected you, and for the first time in a while, you could feel your heart opening up to him again.

Tears threatened to spill.

‘Hold your head up,’ you reminded yourself, ‘if not, the crown falls.’

“You can tell me,” he spoke again after a while.
“I rather not talk about it all here,” you paused. You really rather not reveal much more about yourself to the man you were contemplating leaving, but you couldn’t allow him to hold on to the impression your step-mother had left of your character. “His name was Okada Kurosawa. He found me after I ran away from home.” You were telling him the truth, just not the whole truth.

Okada Kurosawa, the founder of your corporation, hadn’t simply ‘found you.’ You had climbed out of your second floor window barefoot; taking nothing with you besides a throwing star and the nightgown on your back, and ‘accidentally’ ran across the front of his limo. Your meeting may have been a lot of things, but it wasn’t coincidental. It was very much intentional; you had meant to meet him. You had watched his car drive past your window at a certain hour every night, returning from work – you had later discovered – and having found out who he was, knew that he would be your only chance at escaping your miserable existence.

“He took me in, made me who I am today. He was the closest thing that I had to a father figure. He was a widower without children, so I became his only family. I was like a daughter to him. He’s never looked at me any other way. He was more of a human being than she could ever hope to be,” you slowly explained, biting back the tears as you remembered him.

His blue eyes darted back and forth across your face as he listened, carefully studying your every expression. Once he understood that was as far as you were willing to explain, his hand around you slipped across your back to hold your other shoulder, his other arm lifting up to hold your face.

His expression was unreadable as he leaned over, eyes focused on your lips, slowly closing the space between you. Your eyes frantically danced between his eyes and his lips, inching closer slightly, but as his lips brushed yours, you pulled away, looking at your feet.

His face still remained very close to yours. “I’m sorry,” you whispered apologetically. It was a sincere apology, for you couldn’t bring yourself to kiss him. You were afraid of growing irrevocably attached.

“What are you sorry for now?” he asked; his voice like rich velvet.

You couldn’t tell him.

…

You grudgingly walked back into the ballroom, your arm firmly in your husband’s. You could feel the burden of the stares around you with every step forward. You refused to raise your head up to look at them, but you saw it all with the corners of your eyes.

You hadn’t realized until Seto spoke that you were scanning the hall for your step-mother, a fearful expression etched across your features.

“I had her escorted out,” he explained. You nodded faintly.

From where you stood, you could see the couples gracefully waltzing across the ballroom floor under the grand chandeliers in the center. The skirts of their dresses whisking about them as they spun, it was mesmerizing. You felt a small smile find its way to your face as you looked on.

“Dance with me,” you heard him say huskily in your ear. You could feel goosebumps spreading from the spot where his breath had broken against your skin.
“No, I can’t!” you protested hysterically, shaking your head, pulling him back. “No, I can’t be in the middle of all that attention right now.”

It was only polite to dance at least one dance when attending the Governor’s Ball. It was otherwise seen as a form of disrespect towards the host. The exception to this, year after year was none other than Seto Kaiba, who never danced. No one expected him to and when they did, they were too afraid to ask, so he never did. You didn’t even know he knew how.

Couples stopped dancing around you mid-motion, their hands falling away from each other, intently looking on almost as if in a trance, as the infamous Seto Kaiba strode across the ballroom floor. Your refusal to walk forward offered him hardly any resistance as he pulled you along.

“Why are you doing this?” you hissed. “You never dance.”

“That’s because I hate it.”

That answer provided you more questions than answers.

Guests gathered to watch and you even caught a glimpse of the Minister and his wife walking up to see what they probably thought was a once in a life time sight.

You couldn’t help but believe that they were watching for the wrong reasons. Your eyes fixed themselves on Seto’s chest, unable to look around at the crowd that had gathered.

His one hand snaked around to the small of your back as his other gripped your own.

“People will stare,” he stated gruffly, as your train of red lace followed behind you in a flurry at how fast he moved with you, “make it worth their while.”

Your eyes travelled up to meet his at that comment. He held your gaze.

If you weren’t so petrified, perhaps you would have been impressed by how proficient he was at dancing.

He pulled you in without warning, his eyes travelling down to your lips, as he forcefully placed his lips over yours.

Your mind went blank, but your feet continued to move. Did he know what he was doing?

Your entire body enveloped in a wave of pins and needles at his actions, your breathing ragged, you couldn’t respond to the kiss, let alone know what it felt like. Your eyes still open; you saw your hand on his shoulder gripping him tighter to hold yourself up.

When he pulled away, a faint trace of a smirk was etched across his lips, contrasting his stony expression which had permanently settled across his features. There was a certain weakness in your knees, which was slowly spreading across your limbs.

Your eyes were wide as you stared back him, words eluding you. You wanted to know why he had done that, but you felt you already knew. You wouldn’t acknowledge it though, that it was done for your sake. That would only stand to complicate things.

The earlier incident had affected his image too, and he was merely attempting to have it forgotten. You wouldn’t believe any other explanation.

Across the blur of people you saw as you swirled past, you noticed reactions varying from
adoration to pure shock written across their faces. The room erupting into whispers again. As formal as the ball was, it still remained a fairly intimate affair. It was mostly attended by guests much older than you and Seto, so you hoped that in their mind; it would be received well, as a young couple in love, even if half that couple consisted of the entirely unfeeling Seto Kaiba.

At the conclusion of the song, as you walked off the floor, the hostess - the Minister’s wife, came rushing up to the two of you.

“Oh my dear,” the older woman addressed you affectionately, “you looked like a dream just now! Your beauty really is the pride of Japan. Mr. Kaiba, you must know how truly lucky you are!” She reached out a hand cautiously to your cheek, “I’m so sorry this happened to you, especially attending an event at our invitation. We allowed a national treasure to be treated this way, we are truly horrified. Don’t worry my dear; her actions tonight spoke more of her lack of propriety and character than they did of yours. Everyone is too occupied talking about how beautiful you looked.”

“Thank you, your ladyship, your words are certainly a source of comfort to me,” you spoke as you lifted your hands to hold hers, reassuringly. You weren’t entirely convinced, but in hindsight, an incident such as the earlier one was probably more a disgrace to the host than the victim, at having failed to prevent such a blunder.

“If you’d excuse us,” Seto interrupted, “We’ll be taking our leave for the night.”

“Will you not be staying for dinner? Oh that won’t do,” she protested.

“We really must get going,” you replied, taking your husband’s lead. You had no intention of hanging around any longer.

“If you insist,” she spoke crestfallen, as she called her husband over to give their farewells.

“She was positively adorable, like a bunny! Such contrast to Mr. Kaiba’s icy demeanour don’t you think?” you heard her gush to her husband, as you walked away after exchanging farewells. You briefly made eye contact with Seto at that comment before promptly looking away. You couldn’t have read what the hell he was thinking anyway.

You, on the other hand wondered what about your red lip and dark eye-make up had given her the impression of a rabbit.

…

Having retrieved your coats, walking down the steps of the estate, you heard an enthusiastic voice call out.

“Hey, Bro!” Your brain vaguely recalled that this man approaching you two with wild black hair was the younger Kaiba that you were yet to be introduced to.

“You’re late, as always,” you heard Seto snap roughly.

“Time has a way of getting away from me,” he smiled sheepishly, rubbing the back of his head.
“I’m Mokuba by the way, Seto’s younger brother, it’s nice to finally meet you big sist– Wait, how old are you again?” He introduced enthusiastically, before interrupting himself. The stark contrast between the two brother’s personalities was quite amusing to you.

“Twenty-one,” you added as you introduced yourself, shaking his hand.

“She- she’s younger than me? You married someone younger than me – by that much?” Mokuba almost shouted at Seto accusingly.

“Mokuba, watch what you say in public.” Seto scolded him harshly.

You watched as a grin, akin to the Cheshire cat spreading across Mokuba’s face, mostly directed at Seto.

“What?” Seto snapped in response.

“Oh, nothing,” Mokuba continued slyly, “It’s finally nice to meet the rest of the family isn’t it? Seto has had your eye on you for quite a –”

“That’s quite enough,” the older Kaiba growled. You couldn’t help but smile at how genuine Mokuba seemed to be.

“Are you guys leaving already? Not sticking around for dinner?”

“Do I ever?” You heard Seto interrupt.

“Hardly, but I wanted to get to know my new sister” Mokuba laughed, “This is the Governor’s Ball, you should stay a little longer, I’m sure the Minister would like that.”

“I’m sure he would,” Seto spoke in a haughty voice, “Maybe next time he should invite better company. And maybe you should visit Domino more often.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It’s nothing,” you smiled, preferring for that incident to not be repeated again in your presence.

“Oh man, that’s too bad, are you going back to Domino tonight?”

Seto replied, yes.

“Oh, well at least I hope the dancing is not over!” Mokuba exclaimed excitedly.

“It’s a ball Mokuba, the dancing is never over,” you explained in a way you didn’t realize was found endearing by your husband.

…

“I had meant to introduce my brother to you tonight,” Seto told you on your way back.

“You did.”

“Formally, not the half-assed introduction he gave himself.”
“I didn’t mind it,” you dismissed him, as you undid your hair from your bun, allowing it to fall in waves past your shoulders.

…

Seto felt your weight falling against him a few moments after your conversation with him had ceased. He wrapped an arm around you, laying you down, careful not to wake you.

He watched the moonlight pouring over the side of your face from where you lay asleep on his lap, shadows dancing across occasionally as the limo moved under a grove of trees. He gently moved a strand of hair away from your closed eyes, while the rest of your locks cascaded in waves down his legs.

His expression contorted in deep thought. He had sensed distance in the way you had spoken with him, though he couldn’t place the hostility. He wondered why that had bothered him so much.
Don't Recall

Chapter Notes

So, this one's interesting. It's kind of the climax that the past few chapters were building up to, and now we're at a cross road.

So please do let me know what you think. I am hoping to have the story go down a happier road, but I'd like to hear you weigh in to see if that opinion is reflected.

The chapter was inspired by and title is based on the K-pop song of the same name, all the points to you if you pick up the references in the dialogue!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sometimes, relationships with a great amount of potential fall apart with no good reason besides awful timing. This was a perfect example of that.

Kaiba Corp. was preparing to launch a major new video game that the company had put a lot of faith in. The strain from the resulting pressure was becoming evident on Seto. A damaging combination of sleep deprivation and elevated stress was beginning to take its toll on his health and secondarily – though not by much – his mood. He was constantly irritated by the most insignificant things, more so – if that was even possible – than usual, his temper was on an even shorter fuse and just all the more disagreeable to be around.

This was possibly further amplified by your own over exhaustion and heightened stress resulting from your work. Your entertainment company was going through a major upheaval, with one of your producers leaving, attempting to take with him an iconic boy group the agency’s name was synonymous with, and in turn breaching both their contracts. Between securing any further groups from leaving, preventing any groups associated with the scandal from disbanding, protecting the company’s image, stock value and involved group’s reputation, while juggling the lawsuit and managing your acting and campaign shoots were entirely draining.

The combination of your two already very dominant, uncompromising personalities, forced together at times of heightened external strain with no intimacy to dissipate the tension, spelt certain disaster.

Your acid reflux symptoms were rearing its ugly head again, and three a.m. found you hunched over the toilet, emptying contents of your stomach you weren’t even aware you had. Lack of sleep was the main contributor to this reflux, and as it kept you up at night, it worsened your state of sleep deprivation, subsequently worsening this; it was a vicious cycle. This was starting to become a routine practice around this time of night and so far, you’ve been stealthy enough to evade Seto’s radar.

The man didn’t have one empathetic or compassionate bone in his entire, uselessly tall body, and with your throat feeling like you’ve swallowed hot lava, you weren’t in the mood for one of his dispassionate commentaries.

You threw your head against the wall you were huddled next to, too occupied with writhing in agony to notice the approaching bare footsteps against the stone floor.
“What are you doing on the floor?” you heard Seto’s voice emerge as he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes with his thumb and index finger. You had assumed he had passed out again in his study, supposedly he wasn’t. Great.

You had a few choice words to that question, all of them involving him lacking brain cells, but refrained. You liked to think that it was because speaking in your current condition was too painful.

You began to mumble something incoherent you weren’t entirely certain your brain had processed before spitting out, but your reflexes kicked in before you could finish as you felt the bile rising again and threw yourself over the toilet.

If whatever fragments had come out of your snarky response didn’t adequately answer his question, your actions following definitely did.

You fell back against the wall again, feeling the burning sensation somewhat subside.

“You wouldn’t be dealing with this if you took better care of yourself.”

“Hindsight is twenty-twenty my dear,” you spat back. Probably the only occasion you would find to call Seto my dear, but it looked like the sarcasm was lost to him.

“You were careless!” He snarled.

“Go back to bed my love,” you spoke through gritted teeth, though mostly to stop the urge to gag on acid. It was meant to come off as snarky and sarcastic, though looking at his expression, you knew you hadn’t delivered. He glared at you as if you had grown a third eye on your forehead.

Not wanting him to see you this way for much longer, you forced yourself to slide up the wall, making a note to straighten out your silk lace tank top and shorts, though to what extent those thoughts were translated into actions, you couldn’t be sure.

You could feel his eyes burning holes through the back of your head as you bent over the sink, rinsing your mouth, before you pulled your hair down from the messy topknot you had thrown on.

You wondered why he chose to stand there instead of going to bed. It was grating on your nerves as he followed you wordlessly out of the bathroom.

Pouring half a bottle of antacid into your throat, you cringed at the flavour, which reminded you vaguely of a sickening mixture of fluoride and artificial grape. You began to gag on it, while your arm was half way outstretched to place the bottle back on the stand. Your momentary feeling of suffocation and heaving caused you to miss the nightstand by mere inches, as you placed the bottle on thin air.

The purple liquid splattered all over the floor and yourself, eliciting a frustrated groan from you. You heard Seto clicking his tongue, as he stalked around the bed in annoyance, grabbing a hand towel from the night stand’s drawer and getting on one knee to wipe the purple goo dripping down your legs.

“Can you do anything right?” he snapped. You stood there silently, closing your eyes at the ceiling, not wanting to start a fight, though earlier you had told yourself that you were one impassive comment away from a meltdown. “It’s like dealing with a child. Get your act together!” You fist your palms, willing yourself to stay quiet. “I have enough in my life as it is without having to pick up after you.” ‘Patience,’ you reminded yourself. “I don’t have time for this!” he continued as he stood back up.
It’s been like this for a few days now and in that moment, you finally felt something crack inside.

“I’m sorry did I ask? I’m not some incapable child that needs a babysitter, so you don’t need to fill that role. I also didn’t ask for you to let yourself into my life. You don’t have time for me? I. NEVER. ASKED! Feel free to see yourself out!”

He stared back at you for a moment taken aback by your sudden outburst.

“I didn’t mean it like that,” he offered after another moment of carefully studying your face.

“I’m sure!” you sneered, allowing yourself to finish riding out the wave of infuriation that had overcome you.

You stood there for a few minutes, both of you did, silently until your phone on the nightstand began ringing.

Surely even a man like Seto could feel that this relationship was falling apart. You two were always at each other’s throats over the most juvenile things.

You picked up your phone before he had the chance to snap at you too. Your director of marketing and public relations spoke on the other end.

“I think we need to hold an emergency meeting about AoE, Watanabe is declaring that he’ll be taking them with him to the press. Our stocks are falling, fast!”

AoE, or more commonly known as Angels of the East was your highest grossing girl group, as well as the highest earning group in the country. There was no way you were going to allow some deranged producer to bring them down.

“Release a statement denying his claims. I’ll be right there,” you informed her.

You never understood why people chose such ungodly hours of the day to declare wars.

…

Rushing down the hallway to the board room, the ankle length skirt of your light blue, embossed, small polka dot dress billowing behind you, your director of PR and marketing caught up to you, offering you a smoothie, and a small smile.

“I thought you could do with this.”

“Thanks,” your responded as you plucked the plastic cup out of the cardboard holder, holding the door open to enter the glass boardroom.

You took your seat at the head of the table, as you looked at the dozen or so team leads and members from marketing, PR, finance and communication, waiting for you to address the crisis.

You began speaking but you were so sleep deprived that you couldn’t feel your face.

A few hours passed with you and your team playing damage control and it was now past eight in the morning. You could tell by the looks on everyone’s faces that they were one strategy or phone call away from collapsing on their desks, and you desperately wished you could release them.
You were leaning your forehead on your left arm, massaging it with your fingertips, listening to the head of communication suggest something when the door swung open behind you.

You looked around; ready to release your wrath on whoever for their rude intrusion to see your husband standing there, wearing a suit you hadn’t seen before. You almost didn’t recognize him in a navy suit, white shirt slightly unbuttoned at the top with no tie.

“We need to talk,” he fumed.

It was after this that you looked at his face to see blue eyes seething. It took you a moment to process his intrusion before your own anger materialized. You peered around him to see your assistant bowing down to the ground at you behind him.

You closed your eyes in exasperation. You weren’t sure what you had done to provoke his ire to the extent that he felt it was warranted to seek you out at your company, disregarding your authority, barging into an important meeting, but it was beyond the point. You wouldn’t tolerate his egotism.

You exhaled before speaking.

“Can it wait?” you asked, raising your eyebrow. Stupid question.

“It can’t,” he over enunciated his words to place unneeded emphasis.

“Hinako, show Mr. Kaiba to my office, I’ll be right out,” you spoke ignoring the positively livid CEO in front of you, as you turned back to the room full of people, absolutely petrified having witnessed the literal sparks that had flown between you two in that moment.

You could understand their terror; it was not every day that the most powerful man in Japan marched into a building, demanding an audience with the CEO of that corporation – of course when he did, those who experienced it never lived to tell the tale. Regardless of whether or not he was romantically involved with the aforementioned CEO, you could understand how the concept could be terrifying, especially given that they found your presence daunting enough as it was.

“Meeting adjourned. Yoshida,” you addressed the head of communications, “email me your idea and I will consider it. Rest of you, brief your respective teams of the decisions made, have them complete whatever needs to be, and take the rest of the day off.”

With that, you picked up your tablet and smoothie and disappeared out the door.

When you entered your office, you found Seto sitting with his arms crossed, to the right of the two rows of chairs that lined your glass coffee table, next to the head chair.

“What on earth are you trying to pull?” you slammed the door behind you as you approached him.

“Explain to me what the hell this is,” he threw a tablet down on the coffee table, with what appeared to be an open article.

You set down your own tablet and drink, bending over to pick it up, habitually placing an arm over your chest to stop the button up front of the dress from revealing your bra as you leaned over – the action was purely habit, it didn’t really matter what he saw because there wasn’t exactly anything underneath there that he hadn’t already seen.

You scanned the screen to see a picture of you, lying over white sheets, with another white sheet covering everything besides your bare shoulders and an entire leg up to your hips. It was very tactically covered but it so blatantly implied nudity underneath. Your face was flushed, dewy with
hair damp and sticking to your skin. It definitely suggested sexual aftermath and looking at your expression now, you realized it was a lot more suggestive than you had realized at the time. It wasn’t a bad picture; in fact you thought it was very tastefully done and you were quite proud of it. It may drive the purists that worshipped you nuts but that was about it.

“My Dolce & Gabbana perfume campaign?” you asked nonchalantly. You had actually forgotten that it went live today.

“This,” he spat, emphasizing it with a tone of disdain, “is plastered all over Shibuya crossing, across Tokyo, and all over major billboards and screens across the continent!”

You failed to comprehend his point.

“It’s an Asia-wide campaign, that’s the idea.”

“I don’t want my wife being presented to the world this way. You’re a Kaiba now, I expect you to hold yourself with more dignity.”

You could feel a headache forming; it was too early for his self-righteous degradation.

“Are you suggesting that I lack integrity? I’m my own person before I am a Kaiba and this is my career. If you wanted a quaint, conservative, subservient wife, you looked in the wrong woman,” you bit back.

“Have it removed,” he commanded.

“Absolutely not,” you stood your ground, returning his glare.

“Remove it, or I will do it myself!” he threatened.

“Just try it, I dare you. I’m not some finishing building block to your empire. You can’t expect to control me like I’m some sort of belonging!”

“Please, don’t flatter yourself,” he snarled. You narrowed your eyes, did he just declare that you were worth less than a glorified trophy?

You had originally intended to wait till the tension from his company’s game launch had subsided to make a judgement as you didn’t want to further stress him out, but since he had the free time to occupy himself with matters like this, you would get it over with now.

“Fine,” you declared, walking over to your desk, retrieving a brown envelope filled with documents. You walked around the head chair facing the coffee table and instead stood across from Seto, throwing the large envelope at him.

“What the hell is this?” he glared, as he undid the string to open it.

“I want an annulment.”

Suddenly the room fell so silent you could hear a pin drop

“What?” he snapped his head up to glare at you, blue eyes shrouding all his emotions in obscurity.

“This relationship is toxic, I don’t recall ever being happy with you and I dare say I don’t see myself finding happiness with you in the future.”

“Say you don’t mean those words,” he demanded in a low growl.
“I wish I didn’t,” you spoke, your voice thinning out to the extent of cracking.

“Have you forgotten the reasons you entered this marriage? The reason things played out this way?”

“Ah, yes, my board members and the issue involving the inheritance, all taken care of.”

Over the course of the past week, in the middle of all the other gong shows, you had managed to secure enough stocks to make it so that your board couldn’t forcefully have you removed. If even a remote possibility of it had existed during your marriage to Seto, there was absolutely no means for it to be achieved now, at least anytime in the near future. As far as inheritance went, you had written your final will to state that should the occasion arise that your current successors are removed; your assets will be auctioned off and donated to charity in the case of your untimely departure.

“You’re willing to allow a business venture of this magnitude to fall through because of your personal feelings?” There it was again, that tone of voice which implied that your personal feelings held no consequence as they lacked monetary value.

So much for his grand declarations of pursuing you as if it was some conquest, this was nothing more to him that a business deal, with the pretty cake topper for his empire being a bonus.

“Personal feeli–” you sighed, resisting the urge to laugh sardonically as you helped yourself to a seat across from him. “Yes, personal feelings. I’ve lived my entire life, allowing rationality and profit to dictate my life Mr. Kaiba,” it was strange addressing him by his last name again. “Being a businessman you should know what that’s like. It offers great confidence in your decisions and immense clarity in your perspectives, but it’s a rather bland existence, and I certainly refuse to live through my marriage that way.”

“Think twice before you make a decision you will regret!” He barked.

“The only thing I regret is ever letting you touch me.” It was true, those words, out of all the other hateful words you had forced yourself to say, were sincere. You wished you had never allowed him to get involved with you closely as he had, perhaps then you wouldn’t be sitting here now, forcefully trying to sever the attachment you had formed to him, desperately trying to expunge the fondness that refused to fade.

“Fine, if that’s how you feel,” he dangerously narrowed his eyes, voice so low it was barely audible, as he snatched the envelope from the glass coffee table and strode out of your office.

“When you thought he was out of earshot, you allowed yourself to sink back into the chair.

“I’ll have my lawyers contact yours,” you offered as he reached the door, standing up.

When you thought he was out of earshot, you allowed yourself to sink back into the chair.

“I can’t live the rest of my life with a husband that won’t love me once,” you whispered to yourself.

“What?”

Your head snapped around to see him standing in the doorway on the far end of your office, door held open.

He walked back to you faster than he had stalked out, fingers clasping around your upper arm before you could even react.

“What did you say just now?” he demanded.
“My lawyers, I said I’ll have them con–”

“After that!” he interrupted impatiently.

You hesitated for a moment, contemplating what to do.

“It’s nothing of consequence, I assure you. It pertains to personal feelings, which I realize now should never have been brought into this relationship. Perhaps then, it would have lasted longer,” you spoke, descending into a whisper, as sorrow overcame you.

“Love? That’s what this is about?” he inquired, as if he was belittling the notion as a whole, referring back to your original comment. If he had heard, why bother asking?

“What would you like to hear? That I’ve fallen hopelessly and irrevocably in love with you? Because unfortunate as that may be, that is the reality I’m looking at, and I hate to burden you with my insignificant emotions which in comparison to the magnitude of this venture may seem bothersome but this is the response I ultimately have for your insatiable curiosity, Mr. Kaiba.”

“You think I don’t love you?” he questioned in a deep voice after watching you with knitted brows through your entire confession turned condemnation of his sentiments towards the significance of love. You tried your best to appear unfazed by his straightforwardness.

It was now or never.

“Do you?”

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think about this one :)
Unrequited Love

Chapter Notes

Here you go, bonus chapter for all you hopeless romantics out there!

Well, it's not really a bonus, we're still in relationship hell with no communication but it gets better somewhere in there, I promise!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He watched you for a moment, stepping closer; eyes intently wandering over your face. The mask over his eyes seems to have lifted. They looked clear as day.

“Was I too ambiguous?”

“Young question is too ambiguous. I have no idea what you’re asking me, just like I have no idea what you’re talking about half the time.”

“What exactly is that supposed to mean?” his irritated undertone evident again.

You took a deep breath in exasperation.

“You demand a relationship out of me. To this date, I lack a clear understanding of what prompted you to do it. You’ve given me many factors that influenced you, but never the actual reason. So I ask you, do you love me?” Asking Seto Kaiba if he loved you was a terrifying feat, and it opened the doors to a much more daunting reality. You could feel pins and needles pulsating across the side of your head as you asked this. He merely continued to look at you, blue eyes staring into your soul. So you spoke again, disappointed.

“Perhaps it’s a question that requires you to reflect deeper before you – ”

He wouldn’t allow you to finish that sentence as his hands cupped your face, stepping towards you, closing whatever small space had existed between you two. He tilted his head as he leaned down, slowly pressing his lips against yours, albeit forcefully.

You lifted your hands up from your sides frenetically, desperately trying to find a point of contact to break away from him.

He always did this, whenever you confronted him about emotional sincerity, he would overwhelm you with physical affection.

Your fingers wrapped around his palms, as you forcefully removed his hands holding you in place, pulling your head back.

“No!” you protested as you broke away. “I understand that I provide you with physical pleasure. I’m asking you if you hold any emotional attachment to me. I don’t want some superficial affection for my outer appearance. That will fade before I’m thirty. I’m asking you if – Oh my goodness,” you interrupted yourself softly as you studied his expression – it held confusion rather than concern, he wasn’t sure of the answer himself, it was clear, which meant he didn’t, “you don’t feel any of those things for me, do you?”
“I do,” he suddenly interjected roughly.

“No you don’t, please don’t force yourself,” you spoke so quietly it was hardly above a whisper, you don’t know why your voice sounded as if you were on the verge of tears. You reached up one hand and placed it on his cheek, smiling sadly. “I’ll remember you like this,” you said, tears filling your eyes.

As you closed your eyes, you could feel warm tears streaming down your face. You looked down to hide them, excusing yourself. You made to walk past him and his hand circled around your forearm unsurely, easily allowing your hand to slip through his grip as you kept walking.

By the time you reached the other side of your office doors, you were sobbing hysterically. There was a certain feeling of something definitively coming to an end that was devastating to you.

Your assistants looked up from their desk, pure shock evident on their faces; no one’s ever seen you crying. They probably weren’t even aware that you possessed the ability to express anything besides anger.

You glared at them through your tears before tearing off towards your private bathroom.

...

You didn’t go home to the mansion that night, instead returning to your penthouse after weeks of being away. The two of you had decided to keep your penthouse and have it regularly maintained so as to not arouse suspicions of fans and media.

The majority of your belongings were still in the penthouse so you were able to manage even without what was left in the Kaiba manor.

Days passed and Seto hadn’t contacted you, the conversation you had in your office was the last you had seen him. When you came back, he was gone, and so were the documentation to proceed with an annulment. His intentions were clear to you.

It was never even a proper relationship, and yet you couldn’t help but cry. Every time you found yourself alone, you cried. You cried for the man that never loved you, for what could have been, for the memories you didn’t even particularly cherish. You knew you would miss him. Given your affections, that much was obvious, but for the short amount of time you were with him, you couldn’t have predicted a despondency and unhappiness of this magnitude.

In the dark depths of your mind that you would never admit existed, when the reality of his absence became unbearable, you wondered if you ran to him, if he would take you back, but your pride would never allow such a shameless display. Even if he did take you back, it would still be for the wrong reasons, you reminded yourself.

You had brought yourself to retrieve your remaining belongings from the manor many times, but the prospect of it being removed felt so final that you would turn back each time.

…
Your eyes had assumed a permanently bloodshot appearance, but you were so far removed from everyone that no one around you noticed – if they had noticed, they were too scared to draw attention to it.

Monday morning found you dressed in a rose coloured blazer dress and heeled ankle boots, trudging to a meeting for a gaming convention. As you stepped out of the backseat of your car, out of the corner of your eyes, you had observed the black car you had suspected had been following you for the past week. Walking up to the building, you wondered if it was your imagination that it was inching forward, ever so slightly with every step you took. You watched its reflection against the glass walls of the building for a moment longer as you walked.

Clutching the decaf coffee cup tighter in your hand, you made your way in through the revolving door.

Looking at your phone you realized you were running uncharacteristically late, but the steep incline of your heel against the slick marble floors of the lobby didn’t offer you enough traction to pick up your pace.

When you finally made it up to the correct floor, adjusting the black choker around your neck as you stepped out the elevator, you saw the other CEOs filing into a board room at the other end of the hallway.

You opened the door and walked into the room, and the first things your eyes made contact with were deep blue ones. You froze in place. For the amount of weeping you did over the man, you had failed to consider that he of all people would most definitely be here, at a meeting concerning a gaming convention.

He was dressed in a tailored black suit; his expression was neutral, composed and unreadable as always. For the time you had been with him, you had fancied yourself pretty capable of discerning his emotions beneath his perfectly poised mask, but in that moment; nothing.

You looked around the room; eyes gliding across the long conference table, and to your dismay, the only seat available was the one next to him. It was understandable, no one wanted to sit next to Seto Kaiba and accidentally be on the receiving end of his wrath.

You unwillingly brought yourself to pull out the chair to his left, sitting down.

From your peripheral, you could see him eyeing the coffee cup you had placed on the table, before shifting his focus to look at you, though he refrained from saying anything.

To the left of you, was a middle-aged gentleman, perhaps in his late fifties, fairly stout, clad in a sickly grey-green coat. You couldn’t help but notice how since the moment you sat down, his eyes maintained their focus on your bare thighs. In hind sight, as formal as this dress was, perhaps it was a tad too short for the likes of this crowd, and maybe a little too deep cut along the collared neckline. The hemline of the dress receded above mid-thigh when you were sitting, making it appear quite revealing.

Your usual meetings within the entertainment industry never brought you to concern yourself with things like this due to the nature of the field.

The atmosphere on the other side of the chair, you could cut with a knife.

Desperate to not let the tension get to you, you absentmindedly played with the bun that was tied to
the nape of your neck.

When the meeting was finally underway, the lights dimmed to allow for the screen at the far end of the room to your right to be visible and the tension diffused somewhat, mostly due to the fact that it wasn’t clear enough in the room to see your estranged husband next to you. Then again, he was also looking away from you.

In the obscurity of the dimness, you could feel a hand creeping up your leg under the table; plump fingers massaging your thigh, slowly slipping towards your inner-thigh. Bile rose up in your throat as you realized what was happening. You gripped the hand and discreetly threw it off your leg, only for it to return moments later, travelling further up your leg.

You didn’t want to draw attention to yourself for an incident like this in a room full of fifty to sixty something CEOs. You gripped the hand again, digging your nails in as painfully as you could, throwing it off of your lap again. You moved your chair away from him, desperate to get away from his grasp, accidentally bumping it against Seto’s.

You cringed as it made impact, closing your eyes tightly, digging your heel into the carpet to anchor you down, as if it made a difference now. You hoped he wouldn’t notice the commotion. He did.

He turned his chair towards you slightly; you tried to look past him at the screen, and you wondered if he could see the distress on your face.

Seto looked away again as you heard the wheels of the chair next to you roll closer, and you squeezed your eyes shut in dread. You felt the unwelcome hand creeping up your leg when suddenly Seto’s arm shot out, without sparing a glance in your direction and gripped the older man’s hand, from how it looked, crushing it.

The other man immediately recoiled, pulling his chair away with him as he moved back to his original place. You felt Seto’s hand extend over both your legs, gripping the thigh furthest from him, clutching it protectively. You felt him squeeze down on it almost reassuringly, discreetly maintaining his grasp on it throughout the whole meeting, even when he spoke, occasionally rubbing his hand up and down your thigh.

At first you were relieved, but once that wore off, you could feel your heart clench at his touch. You didn’t speak throughout the meeting, you had nothing to contribute, and most of it consisted of the committee arranging the convention asking the individuals present if they were in agreement with certain aspects of the organization, which if there was anything that bothered you, Seto would already be addressing it before it would even occur to you.

When the meeting ended, the businessmen began filing out, making small talk amongst themselves, while the man next to you hurriedly scurried out of the room, making himself scarce to Seto Kaiba.

Seto stood up, and you picked up your bag, ready to take your leave as well. As you stood up, and turned to leave, you felt his hand wrap around your wrist, tighter than he had back in your office, much tighter.

You looked down at your wrist before looking up at him.

He waited for everyone to leave the room before pulling you behind him. He picked up your coffee cup, putting it to his lips, taking a sip before almost instantly spitting it back out.
“Don’t drink this crap, it’s not good for you,” he ordered, his face contorted with disgust as he threw it in a nearby trash can as he passed it.

He pulled you to a sunny corner of the corridor where light was pouring through the glass wall, framed with dark wood. He towered over you, standing exceptionally close; his breath falling faintly against your forehead.

You continued to stare at the ground, waiting for him to say something.

He didn’t speak. You had really hoped he would.

Disappointed, you began to speak, “I haven’t received the annulment paperwork from your legal team yet.”

He stepped forward before those words had left your lips, wrapping his arms around you, pulling you in.

“Come back home,” he spoke, his voice almost a strained whisper. You didn’t resist his embrace, allowing his words to slowly sink in, trying to decipher whether his words were perpetuating his physical attraction towards you or whether he genuinely wanted you back for other reasons. He continued when you refused to speak, “The bed feels empty without you.”

You wouldn’t deny how much you’ve missed his scent, the sound of his heart beating, his deep breaths. It’s only been a few days, but it felt like eons had passed and you unwittingly found yourself melting into him at his touch. You knew he could feel your weight falling forward towards him, but you couldn’t begin to stop yourself. Your resolve was weakening.

You felt him leaning over, pressing his lips against your hairline.

You slowly began to raise your arms to return his embrace when a voice interrupted you.

“Mr. Kaiba! I’ve finally found – oh my, am I interrupting something?”

You tore yourself away from him, almost tripping backwards, feeling your back make contact with the glass wall behind you, to see an older gent, slightly balding, in a grey suit standing at the edge of the adjoining hallway.

You could hear Seto growl under his breath at the interruption.

“I didn’t realize you were with your girlfriend.”

You could see from where you stood next to him, his scowl deepen. You promptly excused yourself, slipping away before either man could stop you, bowing to both of them respectfully as you left.

…

Almost as if Seto’s embrace earlier that morning was enough to make you completely content, your mood was noticeably better throughout the rest of the day. You tried not to read too much into his words and think about where the relationship stood as a whole, simply cherishing the short moment you two had shared.
You had to attend a white tie gala that night. You chose to wear a white, long sleeved gown, with a straight across neckline which just slightly pushed your chest upwards, enough to give you a tasteful cleavage. The dress was fitted up to the waist before flaring away. It was slightly longer at the back than the front. The look was completed with silver, tear drop earrings and your hair was styled into a wavy, half up- half down style, with a messy knot tied half way to create the illusion of an effortless look.

There were a lot of questions asked about why you had attended date-less, and you had evaded answering each one, though every time the question was repeated to you, the more and more it stung.

By the time you returned back to your penthouse around midnight, emotionally you were drained. The earlier feeling of elation had worn off with each question about Seto and now you just felt hollow.

You sunk into your couch, not bothering to change, simply shaking your heels off as you lifted your feet up, reminiscing bitter sweetly about how if Seto was there, he would have nagged at you to get changed before you fell asleep.

…

You didn’t know how long after or when you had fallen asleep like that, but you were awoken by the sensation of being lightly shaken. You opened your eyes to blue eyes staring down at you in the dimly lit room.

For a moment your mind grew disoriented, wondering where you were. You were in your living room the last you remembered, but that didn’t explain his presence. You pulled yourself up to a better angle, reaching out a hand to his face. Surely you were dreaming, you had to be – there was no way he could be in here. Had you not changed your passcode? Though did that even matter?

“I must want to see you so much, I’m hallucinating now,” you laughed bitterly.

“We’re going somewhere, put your shoes on,” he ordered. You started laughing borderline hysterically, throwing your head up at the ceiling, at what you assumed was your unhinged, sleep deprived mind playing tricks on you.

“I think I’ve finally lost my mind,” you muttered, burying your head in your hands.

You felt something slipping under your knees and behind your back, before you felt your body being lifted. You looked up wide eyed to see Seto carrying you across your living room.

“You’re not dreaming,” he clarified as he carried you out the door, closing it behind him.

With that explanation in mind, you thought back to your behaviour just now, feeling your skin crawl with embarrassment.

“Put me down!” you demanded as he stepped into the elevator.

“I don’t think so,” he growled huskily in your ear.

“People are going to see!” you exclaimed.
“Let them watch,” he smirked.

He carried you to his red Lamborghini, which you thought was unnecessarily flashy, though admittedly quite fitting for the man driving it. How loyal of him to not betray his image, you snickered internally.

He opened the door, sliding you in with your legs dangling over the side of the car, as he kneeled down in front of you, slipping on your heels which you hadn’t even noticed him carrying. He then lifted your legs and the train of your dress into the car before closing the door shut.

“Where are you taking me?” you asked in a tone that was harsher than you had intended to as he took his place in the driver’s seat.

“You sound like I’ve taken you hostage,” he said as he leaned over to secure your seatbelt.

“Haven’t you?” You asked as he pulled away. You hadn’t walked here on your own two feet after all, though you weren’t opposed to the idea of being with him.

He didn’t reply to that and your eyes scanned his form, still wearing the same suit he had worn that morning, or rather the morning the day before, considering it was almost one in the morning now. His tie was slightly loosened around his neck.

You noticed that he looked tired. His skin was still flawless, and his blue eyes sharp, but his fatigue showed through. You watched how his hair fell across his forehead, how his eyelashes moved when he blinked, his lips, and every little detail that you had previously taken for granted but had come to miss. You could feel a tightness in your chest.

He looked over at you with concern in his eyes for a moment before focusing back on the road.

You really wanted to be as attentive as possible to every detail in that moment, be as present as you could in the time you spent with him, because you didn’t know if you ever would again, but you could feel your eyelids become heavy as fatigue overtook you, and you unwillingly fell asleep.

When you woke up, your surroundings were still dark and you could sense your neck cramping at the position it had fallen into against the head rest, facing Seto. You felt your right hand weighed down as you tried to move it. You shifted your gaze from him down to your lap to see the fingers of his left hand intertwined with your right, as he held the steering wheel with his other hand. It was the first time he had held your hand that way.

You couldn’t comprehend why that had meant so much. You’ve been much more intimate with him and yet the childish gesture of holding hands made you unexplainably content. Perhaps the childlike nature of it felt more pure and sincere a form of affection, one void of carnal desires and simply conveyed ‘I want to be with you.’

Or perhaps you were feeding meaning into something he had done without much thought. You liked to think it was the former.

“Where are we?” you questioned hazily, as you failed to recognize any of your surroundings. He looked over at you as he named some distant town you didn’t quite know. “Where are we going?” you asked again, hoping that maybe your destination would offer you better clarity.

“I remember you saying that you’ve wanted to go flower viewing in the spring.”

Chapter End Notes
To anyone that's confused, he is referring to when she completely bombed that radio interview back in something like Chapter 4. Yes, he had listened.
You must have watched him for hours, never growing tired of him, longing for more than anything else to just if even for a moment possess the ability to read his thoughts that he kept away from you. You had heard the hesitation in his voice when you had asked him if he loved you and yet contrary to all of this, you defiantly and very likely foolishly, hoped that during the time the two of you have shared, even if not initially, he had grown to hold you dear in his heart.

As the intensity of your thoughts grew, you unwittingly tightened your grip around his hand, prompting him to look over at you again.

“Are you alright?”

“Yes,” you breathed quietly. You weren’t sure if you had misread, but you swore you saw the smallest smile grace his face, if even for a split second, as his fingers tightened around yours, almost as if in response.

The car finally drew up a winding series of dirt roads, climbing further and further, overlooking the small town you had passed. The roads were lined with lush cherry blossom trees in full bloom, petals blowing about as if trapped in a glitter globe. You didn’t even know cherry blossoms bloomed this late in the season; all the ones around Tokyo and Domino had begun to leaf already.

Seto eventually brought the car to a stop, walking around to you and opening your door. It was a little past four a.m. and it was still dark, but you could see daylight threatening to spill over the distant mountains which surrounded the small town below you.

He pulled you along to sit next to him on the bonnet of the car, as the two of you watched the twinkling lights of the village, which reflected the fading stars above, slowly begin to disappear as morning broke through the clouds.

He turned to face you, towering over you, looking vaguely uncomfortable.

“I’ve wanted you from the moment I laid my eyes on you, but I assure you, my sentiments towards you have changed. I don’t expect you to believe me, given my actions in the past few days,” he began slowly. “I’ve never been in love,” he continued, almost uncertainly, saying your words back to you. “I don’t know what that feels like, but if this – having seen this much of you, your unmoving stubbornness, your maddening temper, your midnight tantrums, your tendency to be excited by the most ridiculous; you demand so much – ” he whispered huskily in your ear, “and to still want to call you mine and want to protect you, if that’s love, then I lo- love you,” he paused
for a moment. “Women like you drown oceans,” he quoted; his voice deep, yet it carried a rough edge. “The last few days were torment, I cannot imagine spending another moment separated from you,” he confessed pressing his forehead against yours.

You couldn’t lie; those words shocked you beyond expression.

And yet, just at those simple words, in a way you never thought you could be, you found yourself perfectly and indescribably happy.

Bringing himself to say all that, to be so forthcoming, being a man of such few words, mustn’t have been easy. Did he know enough about you to love you? That was simple; he knew more about you than anyone else alive.

You didn’t honestly know if what he described was love, but it was plenty to let you know that if in the case it wasn’t, he felt strongly enough about you, for those feelings to come pretty close.

You almost suspected if this was stemming more from feelings of possession rather than the likes of love, but you felt as though you had misread so much of his actions and intentions up till now that you decided not to question it.

Besides, if someday his emotions did indeed reveal themselves to be possession; would you really be adverse to it if he continued to treat you adoringly? You pondered the alternative of living without him and that proved most impossible. You wouldn't be greedy for more you told yourself. You wouldn't call yourself desperate, even if this was the first, truly open form of affection you had received in your life, but if this is how he believed he felt about you, you would trust him.

Ultimately in life, perhaps there was no such thing as perfect loves; only human ones, with the potential to grow and learn with time.

Something that started at a form of perfection hadn’t the room to grow over time, and something that couldn't evolve with time wouldn't stand the test of it.

So you would accept this, for you believed this would survive.

You leaned into him, tightening your grip on the back of his suit jacket, but he pulled away, stepping back a couple of steps.

“It’s strange for me to do this considering we are already married,” he trailed off, expression gathering into one of concern, getting down on one knee in front of you as he reached into a pocket inside his coat. He produced a small, black leather box with dainty silver engraving on it.

He looked up at you as he opened it, the rising sun over the horizon illuminating his face in a golden light, hair gently blowing in the breeze, petals of cherry blossom tangling in his fringe.

The opened box revealed a white gold ring, with two twisting bands, each garlanded with clear diamonds in a pavé setting, with a large tear drop shaped diamond in the center, also surrounded by smaller ones, and a blue sapphire placed right underneath it, facing the side that sat against the finger. You couldn’t help but notice how when the sunlight hit it, the entire ring gleamed an iridescent, light blue colour.

The ring was ethereal, but honestly in that moment, the man kneeling before you was much, much more important. He could have proposed to you with a paper clip, not that he ever would have, but it was the thought that mattered.

He spoke your name as if he was saying it for the first time, drawing you back to reality.
“Marry me,” he demanded, gazing up at you with sincere sapphire eyes almost translucent under the first light of daybreak.

Your thoughts, like the petals blowing about you in a flurry, were too scattered. You couldn’t fathom them into tangible thoughts, so you nodded your head, yes. He rose to his feet, his movements seamless, as he wrapped his fingers around your left hand, slipping the ring on your finger, albeit a little roughly.

“Now do you believe me?” he spoke as he took your lips in his, “I’m yours,” he declared in a voice so deep you felt chills down your spine.

You understood that his sentiments towards you were surely incomplete. Even if he had felt a certain way about you for a long time unbeknownst to him, discovering those emotions took longer than a mere few days, but you couldn’t fathom letting him go, and to you who was so deprived of any form of his emotional affections, this was like a parched wanderer receiving water, so to you, this was enough.

“I took for granted,” He spoke, “the privilege of calling you my wife.”

“You were patient with me,” you countered, “and beyond your occasional arrogance, at times, kinder to me than I deserved.”

“My motives were at times, impure.”

“Perhaps, but your motives weren’t always impure,” you disagreed.

You looked up at him, brushing away a petal that had fallen over his eyebrow with your fingertip. You raised yourself on your toes, as you lightly brushed lips with him. You had expected him to return the kiss, likely more fiercely. Instead he leaned down, firmly placing his lips over your forehead, kissing you gently.

You could sense that his feelings towards you have indeed changed, for you perceived that he seemed to see you now more as a person, rather than an ideal.
Thank you so much for all your kind words! I was able to get this chapter out faster because of all your support.
Honestly when I started writing this fic I didn't think anyone would even be interested and didn't see it going past the first 2-3 chapters, so it means a lot, honestly! Especially considering I haven't written creatively in almost 4/5 years!

This is a bridging chapter, at least at the start, a lot of things happen so bear with it, it will slow down in the next one. It just needed to happen for the rest of the story to be triggered forward.

Enjoy...?

He wrapped his arms around you and the two of you stood there, just listening to the wind sing. If someone told you that the only thing moving in the world in that moment was those cherry blossom petals, you’d probably believe it.

…”

“I’ll drive,” you offered as Seto made to get into the driver’s seat. The man probably hadn’t slept in almost twenty-four hours, and that’s not the kind of risk you were willing to put your life in.

“I’m not a child, I’m fine,” he declined, sensing where you were coming from.

You knew better than to argue with him when he was that stubborn, especially in a state of severe sleep deprivation such as this. Ironically, he was no more tolerable than a petulant child at times like this.

He brought the car down the slope of the dirt roads, and the moment he tried to merge into the small, asphalt road that wrapped around the hillside, either he was too tired to spot check or just in a rush, and almost collided head on with an oncoming car. The other car probably would have made direct impact with your side of the vehicle, had you not screamed at Seto to steer away.

The moment the other car had safely passed by, you got out of the car, slamming your door shut, and walked around, holding the heavy fabric of your dress up, to the driver’s side.

“I’m not going to dent your car,” you told him as you threw the door open, “but if you keep driving like this, you’re going to dent both of us. I’ll drive,” you repeated.

He actually complied this time.

As you drew around the blooming hillside, still overlooking the small town in the distance, you noticed Seto dosing off in the passenger’s seat, arms crossed, tie draped over his knee, and his scowl still stubbornly hanging about his features.
You smiled to yourself seeing him like that. As little as you slept, you still hardly ever so that man sleeping. He was always awake when you were and the rare occasion where you woke up before him, he would be up within a few seconds, looking over you.

You saw his shoulders hunch slightly, and his head fall forward a bit as sleep took over.

Your focus was back on the road when his phone rang. You didn’t want to wake him up so you connected the call to the Bluetooth, placing the small device in your ear before answering.

“...10…9…8…7…6…5…” a spine-chillingly unfeeling robotic voice counted down at intervals. You slammed down on the breaks, throwing both you and Seto forward, before his seatbelt pulled him back in, waking him up. “4…3…”

He opened his mouth, looking at you to say something before a car raced towards you from around the cliff curving ahead of you, keeping to the side nearing the small cliff. The road was fairly narrow, and the only other option for you to steer towards was off the unguarded hillside which, though not steep was a fairly long way down. The chances of surviving from a fall like that would be next to none.

You decided to take your chances steering towards the cliff and either having it collapse over you in a landslide, or have the car make direct impact in a head on collision. It would most likely connect with your side of the car anyway.

You threw your arm out in front of Seto, holding him back as you turned the steering wheel as sharply as you could with the other, feeling the impact as your car collided with the cliff.

As the robotic voice in your ear counted down to zero, the other car zoomed by, narrowly missing the decline on the other side.

There was no way that was coincidence.

“I think I owe you a new car,” you told Seto, still stiffly clutching the steering wheel, staring dead ahead. Though from where you sat, it looked like the car had banked against fairly soft earth and long grasses so it wasn’t very likely for the car to actually have sustained any damage.

You heard him undoing his safety belt, before he grabbed your shoulders.

“Look at me! Are you hurt?” he asked agitated. You stared back at him blankly, in a daze.

‘There was no way that was coincidence,’ was all that was repeating in your mind.

A high-pitched static, resembling a dog whistle suddenly blasted through to your ear, causing you to breakaway from Seto, rip the earpiece from your ear and throw it at your feet.

Your breathing picked up as your mind slowly recovered from its shaken state. You looked back through your rear view mirror to observe if the car was actually gone.

“What the hell was that?” you heard him ask from beside you.

“Put your seat belt on,” you instructed, tossing his phone back to him as you reversed the car to clear away from the collapsed soil. “Check the last caller’s number. It counted down from ten before that car almost hit us at exactly zero.”

“It’s blocked,” he said frowning, as you tore down the country roads curving ahead of you.
Neither of you spoke the entire way back, deep in thought about that incident that had almost killed you both.

You arrived back in Domino close to ten in the morning. Seto went back to work and you drove yourself to your penthouse to pick up your phone and handbag before changing and heading to work yourself, the shockwave that had run its course through your body still lightly pulsating at your nerves.

…

“I couldn’t trace the phone call,” you heard Seto’s voice come through your phone around nine that night as you sat at your desk. “I’m coming to pick you up.”

“I think I’ll be a while, go home without me,” you dismissed.

“I’m leaving the office now; I’ll be there within the next ten minutes. Be ready.” And with that he hung up.

You stared at your phone wondering if the two of you were having the same conversation.

Looking down at the paperwork sprawled across your desk, deciding that you weren’t really focused enough to be productive anyway, you started putting the documents away. They could have all been in Latin for all your attention span cared at this point.

You picked up some drafts that you didn’t need and walked over to your shredder, slipping the three sheets of paper in. The error button glowing orange on the control panel indicated that there was a paper jam, which you thought odd considering you hardly every used it. In fact, as far as you were concerned, the last time the thing was touched was probably over two weeks ago.

You opened the cover beneath it, ducking under to see what was causing it to be faced with a half-shredded stack of papers at least half an inch thick. Wresting out the bundle from the blades of the shredder, you noticed that they were the annulment paperwork you had thrown at Seto the week before.

He hadn’t taken them with him, huh, interesting, you thought. That was comforting somehow.

…

“You must use a really good deodorant,” you thought out loud without realizing as you observed Seto wearing the same dishevelled suit from the day before as you got into the car. Though strangely enough, he made it work.

“What?”

“Nothing, just wondering how you still haven’t changed out of that,” you offered in a quieter tone.

“I was busy,” he defended.
“Did you at least brush your hair?”

“No,” he said scowling, messing up his bangs with his fingers as he sifted them through.

“Your employees must love you,” you snickered, feeling emboldened by knowing that he never even considered an annulment. That comment earned you a glare.

…

You woke up the next morning to the feeling of arms wrapping around from behind you and pulling you in. You could feel the warmth of Seto’s toned chest against your back as he buried his face in the crook of your shoulders, his hair grazing against your neck.

“Mrs. Kaiba,” you heard him say huskily as he kissed your neck.

In that moment you were perfectly happy. Then things promptly went spiralling downhill.

“Leave the Dolce & Gabbana campaign,” he whispered again, roughly in your ear, except when his hot breath reached your skin, you felt a cold shiver climb down your spine as dread knotted your stomach at the request.

“I can’t do that,” you meekly replied.

“I’ll pay off your breach of contract.” That angered you because of the condescending subtext of the offer.

“I have a bank account to match yours,” you shot back, turning over in his arms to look up at him. You were greeted with narrowed eyes and knitted brows. “Are we really back to this? Why does that bother you so much anyway?”

“I don’t like seeing my woman displayed so scandalously to the world.” You could feel goosebumps forming at the intensity of his tone of voice as he said this. It didn’t help that he was barely a couple inches away from you as he spoke.

“If it bothers you so much, why don’t you try and have the campaign removed, since you’re so capable. I dare you,” you countered, matching his narrowed eyes.

“I’m not going to publicly go into a publishing and copyrights war with you. That won’t look good for either of us.”

“I don’t get what’s so bad about it,” you cut in before the words had barely left him.

“It implies that you’ve had sex, quite obviously you’re naked and it’s just obscene! I don’t like it. Have it removed,” he growled.

“It’s tastefully done and I’m completely covered!” You defended.

“I’m the only one allowed to see you like that!” he barked.

You were dumbfounded. You just lay there, staring up at him, allowing those words to sink in.

You felt so stupid as you realized what this was about. You didn’t think him capable of jealousy.
Possessiveness, perhaps, but not jealousy, though in hind sight you wondered if those two were exclusive of each other.

“Let’s compromise. We leave this campaign alone, and when I shoot for the next phase, I’ll make sure it’s more tasteful. Deal?”

“That’s idiotic, how’s that compromising?”

‘The compromise is in me putting up with this rubbish,’ you thought to yourself.

“I’m not losing face with that brand because my husband didn’t like it. Take it or leave it.”

“Fine,” he spat, after glaring at you for a few more moments – much to your pleasant surprise. “But this is the last time I’ll tolerate it.”

You didn’t like his dominant tone of voice but decided to let it go, instead pulling yourself up by the collar of his white shirt, pressing your lips against his, as you did the same with your body, swinging one of your legs over his. Tangled together, he folded the arm under you to hold you closer, his other arm held up the thigh you had placed over him, and complying with your wish, he kissed you back.

Maybe if you reacted in a way that pleased him every time he gave in, he would do it more often. That counts as compromise, right?

...

You never realized how traumatized you were by flowers until you walked into your office that morning to find a bouquet of peonies sitting on your desk in a box. You reflexively stepped back for a moment before gathering yourself enough to inspect them.

You checked the note to see that it was signed ‘S.O.’ Recognizing those to be Soryu’s initials, you realized that this was probably the gun you had asked him to have one of his men drop off, yesterday.

Ever since yesterday’s highly suspicious, early morning, almost ‘hit and run’ incident, you’ve been uneasy; feeling like your enemy was becoming increasingly bolder.

You pushed the flowers aside, feeling around for a flap that would open to reveal the compartment holding the gun. Finding the gun, you looked back at your door to make sure no one was entering before hiding it in an inner pocket of your gold embellished, navy military jacket.

As strange as it may be, having a fully loaded gun in your breast pocket made you feel much more secure.

You fixed the arrangement of the flowers, positioning it where you wanted on your desk, before straightening out your white, shirt dress underneath, making sure it fell properly above your knees and heading off to your meeting, tea in hand.

...
Seto came to pick you up despite your protests again as he had the night before. It was almost eleven when you got into his car. Looking over his profile, you could see how the long day had taken its toll on him.

The roads were mostly empty this time of night. As he eventually pulled up to a stop light, another car pulled up beside you. Your eyes absentmindedly wandered to observe that the driver in the car next to you was looking over at you strangely. Perhaps looking over wasn’t the best way to describe it. It was almost as if he was glancing your way surreptitiously; as if he was trying to gage something without being noticed.

You thought this suspicious, considering your windows were tinted and there was no way he could have known who was inside the vehicle for him to just be looking because you were famous. Your intuition told you something was amiss, but you decided to watch for a few more moments before drawing attention to it. What was more; the man had a black baseball cap conveniently covering his face, and he was constantly pulling on it, keeping it down with his free hand.

“The man in that car keeps looking over at us,” you told Seto.

“The windows are tinted,” he plainly answered.

“That’s why I think it’s strange.”

He looked over at you this time, frowning slightly, following your gaze.

You watched the man intently, noticing he looked to be reaching somewhere, drawing something, something like…a gun.

“Drive! Now!” you screamed, whipping your head around to look at Seto, eyes like a deer in headlights.

He comprehended the situation and floored the gas just as the lights changed.

You heard a deafening noise resembling an explosion along with something crushing against the glass next to your head. The car swerved a bit and a sensation akin to a vibration rippled through the car. You screamed out of reflex, ducking as you did.

“It’s bulletproof,” you heard Seto’s strained voice coming through gritted teeth.

You twisted your head in horror to look at the convex like impact the bullet had left on the glass. Had it been regular glass, that bullet would have gone right through your head. You felt a chill drown your body at the realization.

“Bullet resistant,” you corrected him petrified. Even ballistic glass couldn’t handle more than three to five rounds of fire; five at most. All the shooter had to do was out-fire the strength rating of the glass. “I don’t think we are going to be able to handle more than two or three more shots on this window,” you told him shakily, terror evident in how your voice thinned as you spoke. You were pressed as far back as you possibly could against the seat, chest rising and falling at a rapid speed.

“I know,” he said gruffly, his scowl intensifying, shifting his gaze to gage how closely the other car was following you.

You wondered how much experience he had dealing with situations like this to be able to remain this composed. Meanwhile, you were trying your hardest not to hyperventilate.
You felt his left hand brush against your right, before lacing his fingers between yours, eyes never once leaving the road.

“We aren’t going to die,” he spoke through gritted teeth.

You felt another bullet lodge into the window beside you, causing you to instinctively recoil again, wincing at the impact.

Seto squeezed your hand reassuringly as he sped up to twice the speed limit, doing one-twenty in a sixty zone.

Without realizing, you closed your eyes, your lips parting as you began breathing shallowly through your mouth, trying to calm yourself down. No amount of shooting at a practice range could prepare you for something like this.

You looked over your shoulder slowly to see the car had disappeared from its place beside you. You were about to sigh in relief when you were hurled forward in your seat as something collided with the rear side of the vehicle. Seto didn’t move an inch, his hand around you firmly pulling you back before your seatbelt did.

You saw Seto glancing for a split second at the rear-view mirror before increasing his speed. You briefly registered merging into a flyover highway which stretched across the river, and around this time of night, it was also deserted.

The attacker’s car reappeared on the passenger side of the car, as it forcefully rammed itself against your side of the vehicle, pushing sideways, causing Seto’s car to grate against the metal railings. You saw sparks fly as your car grinded forward.

Seto gritted his teeth, unwittingly clenching his hand tightly around yours, as he attempted to maintain control of the car, before accelerating it. You could feel your muscles cramping at his grip. You must have winced though you had tried to hold it in, because he looked over at you briefly, concern flashing across his face as he loosened his hold.

“Did I hurt you?” his voice had an uneven edge.

That was literally the least of your worries.

You liked to think that you shook your head no, before another bullet struck your window. Your breath caught in your throat as you stiffened. You knew you were pushing your luck with that third bullet. The chances of the window holding up against a fourth one was unlikely.

The initial shock of the whole situation having worn off slightly, you pulled your right hand out of Seto’s grip, earning you another concerned look. You turned in your seat to get a better idea of where the other car was relatively to you. The hood of the other car roughly reached your backseat doors, driving parallel to you about two meters away, though they were coming back in for another collision.

“Seto they’re coming for us again,” you warned as he tried to speed up to something like one-sixty or one-eighty as the attacker thrust his car against the side of the trunk, causing the front of your car to slightly spin left wards.

As the other car pulled back into its position, you knew that if the next bullets didn’t penetrate the glass and kill you, this out of control driving would. At a hundred and eighty miles an hour, on an open highway over a river, Seto didn’t have much control of the vehicle anymore whether he liked to accept that or not.
Having considered your options, you undid your seatbelt, reaching your right hand into your breast pocket, clutching the gun. You hesitated for a moment before rolling down the windows halfway, pushing yourself off the seat and drawing your gun out as you prepared to turn around to take aim.

“What the hell are you doing? Where did you get that gun?” you heard Seto yell at you from behind you, his left hand shooting out and wrapping itself around your upper right arm. Surprisingly his arm actually stabilized you considerably. Not being strapped in, inside a vehicle moving at almost two hundred miles an hour felt extremely unstable and rather disorienting.

His arm momentarily released yours as it returned back to the steering wheel to regain control of the swerving vehicle.

“How steady can you keep this thing?” you asked him over your shoulder as you pushed yourself against the window, peering over the half cracked glass.

“Sit the fuck back down!” He roared. He must have reached out for you again because you felt the car swerve as the tips of his fingers brushed against your arm.

“Try to keep it steady,” you told him through uneven breaths, ignoring his infuriation. All you had to do was shoot the front tires, you told yourself.

As you prepared yourself though, you could feel your mental composure come undone. As the reality of it sunk in, you fell apart, unravelling in the most brutal possible way and yet your body somehow pushed on, almost as if on auto-pilot. Balancing your gun on the half opened window you could feel self-doubt clouding your judgement.

Fear caused your breathing to come out jagged, as you pointed it downwards, shooting at the tire closest to you. Your car swerved slightly and your bullet made contact with the other car’s front bumper instead.

There was a pulsating sensation coursing through your veins, your heartbeat in overdrive, you were just not stable enough mentally, and it translated to your physical form. You shot a couple more times with no luck. Your hands were a sweating, trembling mess.

The attacker shot at you and as Seto swerved while speeding up again, the bullet made contact with the back window. The combined force of the bullet connecting with the glass and the increase in velocity, threw you towards the windshield, triggering you to anchor yourself with your elbow digging into the dashboard. You could feel the shockwave from the impact leave you through your shoulder.

You winced as you pushed yourself back to your position against the window.

“Are you out of your mind? You’re going to get yourself killed!”

You ignored him, though mostly, through the rush of adrenaline pulsing behind your ears, your mind couldn’t quite register his words.

You squeezed your eyes tightly closed for a split second, attempting desperately to gather your composure while trying not to cry. You kept repeating to yourself that the alternative of you failing would result in both of you surely dying. The added mental pressure was worsening things.

You pushed your top half out of the vehicle, poising your ribcage against the window, one knee digging into the seat while the stiletto heel of your other foot dug into the carpet. The speed you were travelling at made it impossible not to coil into yourself. Human bodies were not meant to travel at two hundred miles an hour.
Everything was happened instantaneously. Your car swerved towards your side again and something latched on to your jacket and it momentarily stabilized you. The attacker shot at you twice, narrowly missing your right cheekbone. You placed your right hand gripping the gun, over the palm of your left, shooting rapidly at the tires. You heard explosions followed by rubber screeching across asphalt as you fell back, or rather was forcefully pulled backwards by the same thing that had stabilized you seconds earlier.

Your back landed across the gear box, causing you to arch it in pain, as you fell onto Seto’s lap. You laid there, too mortified to breath.

“Have you lost your fucking mind? You could have died! Do you realize how much danger you were in just now?” Seto yelled looking down at you, his left arm wrapping over your waist, fingers digging into you so tightly that it was painful. You’ve never seen him so angry. Through all your arguments, he’s never sworn at you before.

“Ar-is he – did we lose him?” you managed to stutter in almost a whisper

“Do you not care about yourself or do you just not think?” he continued to bark, the intensity of his tone of voice causing it to sound almost strained.

You couldn’t describe the next feeling that washed over you. Your thoughts all collapsed in on themselves and the only reaction your body could produce was crying. Sobbing uncontrollably, you willed yourself to turn over towards Seto, burying your face in his lap.

For a moment, you felt as though your nerve endings weren’t feeding any stimulation to your brain. You didn’t even feel numb, just nothingness. You felt incredibly light. You wondered for a moment if you had injured yourself, but you didn’t feel any pain, and you didn’t know if that was because your body had temporarily blocked it out or if this blankness was a mental barrier.

The only thing you were aware of in that state was that you were crying. You could vaguely sense your sobs reverberating in your chest but it was a distant, almost alien feeling. You hated women who cried, and yet as of late, you found yourself doing it so often.

You could hear words against your ear but none slipped in.

When physical sensation finally seeped back into your body, you comprehended that your crying had stopped. Your face was still buried against Seto’s lap and it felt like the vehicle was still moving, although slower than before. You didn’t know how much time had passed, but you assumed you had lost your attacker.

You slowly turned your head to look up at Seto. You could feel his arm around you stiffen at your movement. His blue eyes glinting with the amber glow of the passing street lights. He continued focusing ahead for a moment before looking down at you.

“Are you going to yell at me again?” For reasons beyond you, that was what you feared the most, so the moment your conscious mind afforded you the ability to form a tangible thought again, this was the first thing that had slipped out of your mouth.

“No.” You noted his voice was still rougher than usual, his face carried no expression.

He raised his left hand away from you, placing it on the steering wheel, as he removed his right from it, bringing it down to your face. You swallowed a knot in your throat that you hadn’t realized was there as he moved a strand of stray hair from your eye, looking back towards the road as he did.
“Foolish girl,” you heard him mutter under his breath as continued to drive, his thumb stroking your forehead, fingers buried in your hair.
Blue Eyed Confession

Chapter Notes

The reader is over reacting again –though maybe not- you decide, Blue eyes white
dragon makes an appearance, and the plot is finally going somewhere!

Irrelevant side note, I lost about two chapters worth of material this morning
accidentally. Woo!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After a while of lying like that, you could feel your feet – one knee bent under and the other
hanging over the side of your own seat – falling asleep, and it was starting to become painful, so
you pushed yourself to sit up. Though instead of returning to your own seat, you pushed yourself
backwards to sit on Seto’s lap, leaning yourself sideways against his chest on the far side of the
driver’s seat, placing your head against the crook of his neck. Your legs extended over his thighs
on to the passenger’s seat.

You felt his grip around the steering wheel stiffening as you moved.

“That’s dangerous, what the hell are you doing?” he asked gritting his teeth as you momentarily
obscured his vision over the road.

As you settled against him, you could feel your entire body, ever so slightly trembling; the
fragments of what remained of the shock from the earlier incident still coursing softly through your
body. He on the other hand felt steady as a rock.

You noticed you were back in a residential area, a little distance from the mansion, although this
was not the route he usually took.

You sunk yourself in as far as possibly could into him, one hand tightly clutching the front of his
shirt, balling the fabric into your fist, while the other one slung over his neck. You buried your face
into the side of his neck. Somehow, the feel of his bare skin against yours was comforting to you in
that moment.

Seto continued to drive, not saying a word, and you liked to think that the sensation against the top
of your head which felt like him faintly pressing his lips over your hair wasn’t imagined.

…

You woke up faced down on your bed, body slightly curved. You vaguely recalled Seto carrying
you up the stairs with your legs wrapped around his waist.

You could hear the shower running in the distance, and as you lifted your head to the side, you
could see that the lights were on. You registered that your jacket was taken off, along with your
heels.
Events of the night gathering again in your mind, you brought your hands to the back of your head, burying your face in your pillow, willing for the incident to erase itself from ever happening and disappear from your memory and yet each time you thought back, it remained, continuing to become more and more real.

You could feel fear creeping under your skin and reflexively, you brought your knees up to your chest.

You heard footsteps emerging from the bathroom, but you didn’t look up. You felt the edge of the bed dipping next to you.

“Why would you do something so stupid?” he demanded to know after a few moments had passed. His voice sounded exasperated, and the edge from earlier remained in his tone, possibly having become more prominent. You couldn’t bring yourself to reply, so he continued. “Just because you can handle a gun doesn’t mean you’re trained to be in a situation like that. You could have gotten yourself killed! Are you listening?” his voice continued to become more agitated. You still refused to look at him, curling further into yourself. “Look at me!” he finally bellowed, pulling you up by your shoulders and twisting you around to face him.

This was probably not the most appropriate thing to notice in this situation, in fact you were quite surprised that in your current state of traumatization, your mind had even managed to register such a detail, but for a long drawn out moment, your mind betrayed your fear and focused its undivided attention on Seto’s bare form, covered only by the towel wrapped fairly low around his waist.

He’s never walked out of the bathroom without being at least partially dressed and as you realized that this was the most exposed you’d seen your husband, you could feel heat rising to your cheeks at the close proximity.

He seems to have completely missed your fascination over his almost naked form as he continued barking at you.

“You’re not the police, or a trained agent, and you’re certainly not me!”

“I’m sorry,” you managed to finally whisper, completely shrinking under his words and menacing glare. “I thought something would happen to you… because of me.”

You could tell that stumped him a bit. You could tell because of the way he blinked his eyes momentarily, almost adjusting – what you perceived – the animosity with which he held you.

“You were trying to protect me?” That question found you with an undertone of ridicule, as he emphasized the word ‘protect’, as if to suggest that you weren’t capable of such a feat, and perhaps you weren’t, but it still stung. “I don’t need you to protect me; I can take care of myself. I can, and will also take care of you. I’m your husband, that’s my job.”

“This is not your fight,” you uttered, defeated.

“It became my fight the moment they went after you,” he defied. “I’ll handle this. Just promise you won’t do something reckless like this again,” he demanded.

“I can’t make promises I can’t kee–”

He interrupted you, growling your name exasperatedly through gritted teeth.

“Promise me!” he demanded.
“I won’t get in your way.”

“That’s not what I’m asking you! You’re playing right into their hands!” he roared. “You keep asking me about a future for us, about having children together. You need to be alive for those things to happen. At this rate, I question if you’ll make it that far!” Ouch.

Perhaps it was the emotional damage already inflicted by the traumatic episode contributing to it, or the psychological attachment you had to the visions he tore down, but tears stung at your eyes at that remark. More than death itself, the thought of being deprived of such a future as a result of it, devastated you. And maybe that’s what people actually fear; the things that death could rob you of rather than the concept of ceasing to exist itself.

You stared at him for a moment, wide eyed before a sob escaped your lips before you could stop it.

You were in over your head. The scope of this threat was overwhelming. This wasn’t the mafia or some corporate suit, this was a combination of both; a coalition of people almost as powerful as you.

What was terrifying about fighting a war blind was the concept of not knowing exactly who your enemy was, and thus not knowing precisely where to aim. It was like battling in a thick fog, against that very fog. The enemy was elusive, powerful and all around you.

You couldn’t solely rely on one conversation your husband had heard for conclusive evidence. You believed him, but even for a man as powerful as Seto Kaiba, it would be difficult to get away unscathed after killing a man out of mere suspicion and a conspiracy theory he happened to overhear. Not that it would end with killing one man either. Your sobbing escalated as tears spilled down your cheeks.

You couldn’t see a way out.

“I told you I would take care of it,” he spoke through gritted teeth again as he pulled you into him, lifting you on to his lap. It should have been reassuring, but you felt nothing. You felt him adjusting his arms on your back while slightly drawing you up as you began to slide down, as you continued to cry. “I’m the most powerful man in Japan. If they think I can’t even protect my wife from their dirty tricks, those has-bins have another thing coming. I’ve had enough. I’ll bury them where they stand.” There was venom in those words; you could feel them chilling you as they seeped into the inner layers of your conscious mind, before the sense of danger he exuded in that moment etched itself into your subconscious.

You were starting to see that there was a side to him that he carefully guarded you from.

You stirred awake to someone speaking to you. You couldn’t feel the constriction of your dress against your shoulders or your waist, the fabric no longer irritating you as it rubbed against your skin.

“Master Kaiba wants you to have this,” your mind finally registered the words. You looked up to the maid leaning over, a wooden tray in hand with a collection of bowls on it.

You pushed yourself up, the sheets falling away to reveal that you were in your bra and underwear.
When had you fallen asleep?

You gathered the sheets by your chest as you addressed the maid.

“Did you change me?”

“No madam.”

“I’m not hungry,” you dismissed her earlier request, more concerned about how you had found yourself out of the dress.

“You’re not eating because you’re hungry, you’re eating to stay alive,” you heard Seto’s voice tear across the room from the doorway, irritation evident in his voice. “Leave it there,” he ordered the maid.

She bowed as she complied, promptly leaving.

He locked the door as he entered the room.

“I changed you and I won’t have you relapsing on me again. Stop putting up a fuss and eat it, and drink your medicine,” he ordered gruffly as he walked around the bed, laptop in hand.

You watched him for a moment, still slightly disoriented from having been suddenly woken from your slumber, before unwillingly picking up the chopsticks and bringing the tray to your lap.

“I’ve arranged for some of my bodyguards to guard you outside the mansion when I’m not around. They’ll be armed but they’ll make themselves scarce,” he advised. “I put your gun back in your bag. Don’t use it unless absolutely necessary. Do I make myself clear?”

You weren’t hugely fond of his authoritarian form of speech, but decided it wasn’t worth your effort to begin a fight over something as trivial his tone of voice.

You nodded, albeit defiantly.

“I have my men looking into the exactly who’s behind these attacks so I can eliminate the problem at the source. I should have done it sooner, instead of waiting to draw them out.”

Chopsticks held against your lips, you looked to see that the time was half past two. He had managed to accomplish all that at two-thirty in the morning? You shouldn’t have been surprised, and you weren’t, not by his capabilities. What astounded you was how intent he was on having this settled. You realized that this was a threat to his safety as much as it was to yours, but a small part of you felt that the threat was, at its core very much your problem first – before he willfully inherited it. So knowing that he felt the need to take it upon himself and commit himself so intensively to protect you felt… nice. It felt nice.

You watched him typing at his laptop, completely composed and through your feelings of admiration and fondness, the earlier aura of danger he had around him resurfaced in your mind, sending shivers down your spine.

This was that same man, you reminded yourself. The man you found comfort in, the man your mind wandered to when it sought peace, the man who had declared he loved you under the cherry blossoms; and yet he was also the same man that appeared to be capable of murder without remorse.

You wondered why that terrified you so much. His ill-intentions were not directed at you and they
–you hoped – never would be, and yet this revelation of sorts frightened you. You’ve always in theory known what he was capable of – everyone in Japan knew the extent of his power. However there was a certain nuance in experiencing so intimately the emanation that conveyed this power and darkness that was exponentially more disturbing than merely being aware of its existence at a distance.

It was the difference of assuming or being told that there was a monster under the bed and actually peering down to witness the monster looking back at you, with your own eyes.
You wouldn’t call him a monster but his disposition tonight – done in your best interest, you understood, was still deeply unnerving.

You ate in silence, occasionally glancing over at him as he worked.

As you finally lay on your side to sleep, the weight of his arm draping over you felt both soothing and unsettling. As always, his touch felt like hellfire and holy water against your skin. When you felt stiff against his touch, he pulled you against him.

“I’m right here, I told you not to worry about it,” he spoke against your ear darkly and that only stood to disconcert you more. The chillingly composed and dark air about him forced your imagination to presume the worst. You pondered all of the unspeakable things this man had possibly done in his life till now that afforded him such peace and worse still, of all the inconceivably wicked things he was capable of doing.

In a strange way, it offered a thin silver lining; a faint feeling of security against your current threat, while drowning you in fear of all that you couldn’t fathom about his morality, or lack thereof.

...

When you woke up around six-thirty the next morning, Seto had already left, and you were left alone to your thoughts, which today of all days, was surprisingly a welcome feeling.
You could feel yesterday’s trauma pulsating in the back of your head in the form a dull numbness. A similar sensation had overtaken the rest of your body, though for the greater part, you now had a clearer judgement than you did yesterday, which then again was not saying very much.

Similar to your husband, you had the tendency to be restless till you discovered the root cause of your problems, so since your conscious mind came to, all your thoughts were focused intently on uncovering who was responsible for yesterday’s attempted assassination. It was all you could seem to process.

Almost as if in a trance, you got ready for the day, mind entirely blank except for one thought burning a hole through; find out who tried to kill you.

Deducing that at least one of the city’s road side cameras had to have captured last night’s incident, you decided to visit city hall to review the camera footage. Dressing in a white, off-shoulder, lace dress, matched with a pair of pink, gladiator style, lace-up ballet flats, you slipped out into the garage, incredibly pleased to not have stepped out in a pair of mismatched shoes, given your current state of mind. It almost felt like an achievement.

Reversing your car out of Seto’s garage that contained more vehicles than a dealership was a nightmare. You discovered that the man had a habit of buying cars on impulse, which apparently was much more frequent than how often you bought shoes. If that wasn’t saying something, you weren’t sure what would. He owned more sports cars than you owned Jimmy Choos, which
frankly you found offensive.

This also meant that he didn’t have a great deal of vacant space for any of your cars except for the two that were already in there, so when it came down to what you wanted to drive, your choices were split between your black Mercedes and your black BMW, which while your husband might disagree, looked exactly the same to you, so you flipped a coin, wondering why you had felt the inclination to buy two of the same car.

When you pulled up to city hall’s traffic control department office, it was almost eight in the morning.

Pulling your shades on, you slipped out of your BMW, careful not to be ambushed by adoring fans or worse yet, vengeful enemies.

You spoke to the receptionist at the desk and she had a gentleman guide you towards the central operations room, who left you in front of the doorway leading in. Opening the doorway into the massive room filled wall to wall with traffic monitoring screens, you entered to be greeted by your husband, making his way out.

You looked up, mildly surprised, though you should have expected him to be here.

“What are you doing here?” he glared.

“What does it look like?” you deadpanned, unable to help yourself.

“No you’re not,” he affirmed gruffly, as if in response to the unspoken answer, pulling you by the wrist back into the hallway, ignoring your protests. “I wiped all the data from last night’s incident,” he explained, holding up what looked to be an USB drive. “This is all that’s left. Anyone that mentions anything of this will have to answer to me. I also took care of the media this morning. You have nothing to worry about. I told you I would take care of it.” His voice sounded almost irritated by your presence.

“Are you upset that I’m here?”

“You promised you would stay out of it!” You were getting tired of the way he was manhandling you and yet what you had witnessed of his character last night was holding you back from addressing it.

“I promised to not be reckless.”

“You getting involved with this is reckless!” he maintained.

As you were about to defend your position, a clerk from the operations room exited into the hallway and you were forced to hold your tongue.

Seto took this as a cue to drag you out of the building, except this time, instead of pulling you along by the wrist; he laced his fingers through yours.

He dragged you to his car, opening the door and gently pushed you in.

“I can’t leave my car!” you protested

“I’ll have someone sent for it,” he simply dismissed before ducking your head into the vehicle and slamming the door.
He didn’t drive very far, pulling up to a park tucked away from the bustle, close to city center. He stepped out, stalking around to open your door.

“What on earth are you doing?” you questioned as he urged you to get out of the car.

“There are too many eyes watching you to be this careless,” he barked as you stumbled out of the car.

“What?”

“I’m telling you that I’ll take care of this. Stay out of it.” he ordered, stressing on every word as if he was speaking to a child. “You’re only putting yourself in more danger running around trying to handle it.”

“You always do this, you could never bring yourself to see me as your equal, could you?” you spoke in a quiet voice, “acting like you’re better than me, more capable, like I’m some sort of useless child!” This was exactly how your step mother treated you.

“We’ve had this conversation,” he sighed exasperatedly, “I wouldn’t have married someone I felt was beneath me.”

“You know exactly how I mean it!” Your voice was still hardly above a whisper, despite carrying an accusing tone. You were too apprehensive of the man standing in front of you to raise your voice at him, and yet your stubborn pride wouldn’t allow you to betray it, despite the warnings of your rationality.

“I’m much more experienced than you, therefore I am handling it.” There was something in his voice that conveyed that statement being final and demanded you to not challenge it.

“Experience? You barely have a few years on me,” you defiantly countered.

“I’m almost ten years older than you!” he bellowed. You staggered back a step. “You can’t begin to fathom the things I’ve seen – things I’ve done. What I have done to get to where I am today, you couldn’t even imagine doing the same. You’re too soft and morally bound! How I got to be the head of my company, what I did to remove my step-father; the man that tormented me for years, and many others like him, you just don’t know that kind of world.” He wasn’t yelling at you. Conversely, it was his deeply composed manner of speaking, very plainly hinting at everything you had only imagined; confirming your suspicions and fears, that chilled you to the bone.

He was wrong, though not entirely. You’ve seen much darkness in your life, both literally and figuratively, and while you’ve manipulated your own fate to a great degree, you’ve never secured anything in your life through immoral means. Not to definitively say that he had, just that while pursuing the things you desired, you’ve never had the occasion to eliminate anyone in your way.

You figured that this was probably the reason your demons still walked free while his were –you assumed – buried in the past.

Usually, this was where you would have begged to differ, interjecting about how he knew nothing of your hardships, and yet in the face of his brutal honesty about himself, you grew afraid. It took a certain kind of man to commit those acts, and one of an entirely different calibre to accept them and speak of them. You stumbled back another couple of steps unsteadily as he closed the space between you, towering over you by almost a foot.

He studied your expression intently for a moment, blue eyes refusing to miss even a fragment of your visible thoughts, before he suddenly kneeled down in front of you.
“Your shoelaces are untied,” he spoke hoarsely, almost nonchalantly, as if the staggeringly dark confession he had just declared of himself never happened.

“You don’t know how I’ve suffered,” you finally managed in a whisper, as his long fingers expertly wove themselves through the pink ribbons of your lace up ballet flats.

“I don’t, and I’m not saying you haven’t suffered. From what I’ve understood from the little information you’ve spared me, I imagine your past was certainly very difficult,” he acknowledged as he stood back up to look at you. You briefly glanced at your laces to see how neatly they were tied as he did. His hands over your shoulder, his gaze forcefully held yours. “Therefore I know you understand me, because you know what kind of place I’m coming from. That being said, unless you’ve had to – take care – of people,” he said, choosing his words tentatively, “the way I had to, it won’t be easy for you to deal with this.”

A shiver ran down your body against his touch, at those words. You knew his palms felt your body tremble. He leaned back upright, lifting them away.

You took the opportunity to create some distance between the two of you.

“You’re afraid.”

“Yes,” you agreed in a strained whisper.

“Of?”

“Everything. I’ve come to grow afraid of everything,” you confessed.

“Even me?”

You hesitated before you spoke.

“Especially you.”

His eyes became unreadable for a moment. You knew you had offended him, pushed him away. In hindsight, perhaps it was a bad idea to create such distance between yourself and the man you feared.

You struggled to hold his gaze, which became increasingly icy against your fearful one.

He adjusted the knot of his tie, looking uncomfortable, before taking a single step forward, covering the ground you had made between you staggering back several steps. He wrapped his left arm around your back, keeping you from falling back.

Towering mere inches away from you; he reached into the pocket of his navy suit blazer, retrieving what looked to be a business card at first. He cast his gaze down at the ground at first as he began to speak.

“Here, I want you to hold on to this,” he said handing it to you.

You looked up to meet his gaze before shifting your eyes to study the card. The card had a dark border surrounding a silver-blue dragon painted in the center.

You didn’t know what to think.

“You’re giving me your blue eyes card?”
I really wanted to play the light and dark that Kaiba constantly switches between, I just thought it would be an interesting dynamic to explore.

I understand that there's quite a bit of relationship drama, addressing many different facets of the relationship and I just think that there's a lot of barriers that someone has to break through to be in a proper relationship with Kaiba that is completely lacking doubt and has transparency, which is just tedious to achieve sometimes. Bear with me :)
I Could Have Forgiven His Pride, Had He Not Mortified Mine

Chapter Notes

I really wanted to get this chapter, the 20th one out today because it's been 20 days since I posted the first one.

I wrote this listening to Dreamcatcher’s new album because it reminded me of anime openings so if it got dark at some parts in the beginning, I apologize, though the actual songs weren’t that dark.

Enjoy that tea scene PandaMuse XD

Enjoy!

“I’m not giving it to you.” Alright…? “I’m letting you hold on to it for the time being.”

Even in your unnerved state, you couldn’t help but let out a small laugh at the implied innocence of the childish notion. You laughed because it was endearing.

If he was as unprincipled as you had imagined, would he have been capable of forming such a thought?

“You’re letting me borrow your card?” You couldn’t fight the grin defiantly spreading across your face.

“You think it’s foolish,” he concluded, something in his tone suggested disappointment and hostility.

The words ‘blue eyes white dragon,’ and ‘Seto Kaiba,’ was synonymous with each other, you didn’t need to be a duel monsters fan to know that. Many would argue that the card defined his identity quite extensively. In other words, it was a piece of him.

You haven’t seen him duel in years, though each time he was asked; he had denied that he had retired. You were surprised he still carried it around, almost like one would carry a picture of their childhood first love. It was sweet, in a certain, obsessive sort of way.

“No, not at all, I’m touched… why are you letting me hold on to it?” You asked mildly perplexed.

“You like ridiculous notions.”

“Come again?”

“The card, it signifies power and destroying all that stands in your way, I thought it would be a source of strength for you in light of our current situation. You look like you need it more than me.” His tone of voice was solemn as he spoke those words and yet his expression was contorted into one of discomfort. You considered perhaps if he felt that he had allowed you to cross too far into his personal territory. You could tell it was incredibly meaningful to him; perhaps this was the most sincere about himself as he had been with you throughout your entire relationship.
This felt more like the real confession.

The gesture felt symbolic. You felt honoured that he regarded you significant enough to be sharing something so intrinsically part of his being.

Perhaps he wasn’t the villain you painted him to be.

“Like a lucky charm,” you offered, holding the card carefully between your fingers.

“Yes, if you must address it in such a juvenile sense. Don’t you dare lose it,” he commanded gruffly, appearing a lot more comfortable having returned to his usual stoic self.

“I’ll take good care of it,” you assured him nervously, offering him a small smile. No pressure, you told yourself, only holding on to the one thing Seto Kaiba could never replace in his life, though the alternative of refusing to accept it would surely devastate the man even more.

Despite how you regarded him in that moment, you felt the obligation to return his sincerity with some form of affection, so you hesitantly wrapped your arms around his waist, sliding your hands under his suit jacket. You brought yourself to rest your head on his chest, though you were too nervous to actually allow your weight to fall against him, so you stood stiffly, lightly brushing the side of your face against his chest.

It was awkward and unfamiliar, distantly reminding you of the first time you had asked him to hold you in bed and for a moment he just stood there. You anxiously lifted your head up to study his expression at the uneasy tension building up between you two, to find him staring back at you with a carefully poised, stony countenance.

“You’re forcing yourself,” he observed. You almost brought yourself to dispute his claim, but it was so blatantly obvious that you couldn’t even defend yourself, so you elected to remain silent.

“Are you afraid of me, or the things I said I’ve done?” He questioned after a few moments of gaging your silence.

You didn’t think he would so keenly pick up on it immediately.

Again, you chose not to speak.

“You need to actually speak for there to be proper understanding in this relationship,” he finally snapped exasperatedly, saying your name as if it was the most irritating thing to him on the entire planet in that moment. “I can’t read your mind.” You highly doubted that.

Asking him to talk about his past would surely be a waste of time and even if not it would cause you the inconvenience of sharing yours in return, and that would just be burdensome.

“Never mind then,” he growled with displeasure, tearing your arms away from around him, without once returning your rather insincere embrace. You wouldn’t allow it; you stubbornly re-clasped your arms around him. “You’re wasting both our time.”

“The things you’ve done define who you are, so I’m not sure how to answer your question,” you finally spoke.

“The past is irrelevant,” he disagreed, “my past doesn’t define me and it certainly shouldn’t influence you. You wouldn’t be holding on to me if you were afraid of who I am today,” he finished in a softer tone.

“What is yesterday but a by-gone present? A man needs roots.”
“I knew someone a long time ago that told me those same words. He was wrong then and you’re wrong now,” he declared narrowing his eyes at you as he undid you from him. You stepped away from him. “Get in,” he ordered as he made to walk around the car.

“You’re entitled to your opinion, but I value sound morality in a man,” you spoke in a quiet voice once you were both in the car.

“Are you insinuating that I lack principle?” He countered aggressively.

“I was merely letting you know that I want my man to have morals.”

“Your tone suggests otherwise. Think what you want of me, but you know nothing about what I’ve endured!” his voice vibrated through the close confines of the vehicle.

“And you about me. If I asked you to tell me your life story, would you oblige? I didn’t think so!” you declared, observing his silence at your question.

“I doubt you’ve ever had to so painstakingly manipulate your life to be where you are today.”

“You speak like you know me!” you finally raised your voice.

“I know everything there is to! I wasn’t fortunate enough to be scouted on the street by the most influential man in my profession,” he snarled.

You couldn’t help but let out a sardonic laugh.

“Scouted on the street? Yes, yes I was! After I scaled down the wall from my second story window where I was starved and locked in the dark for years, barefoot, burying my limbs in rose vine thorns on the way down with nothing but the nightgown on my back! You think I just ran into the man by some coincidence or fate? I don’t believe in such things! I made my own fate! I watched him drive by for months before I staged it. I still have those scars. I jumped out in front of a moving car with rose thorns buried in my skin. Don’t act like I can be studied on some piece of paper! You know nothing about me!” you screamed at him. Your eyes stung with tears but you wouldn’t let any fall. Losing a husband wouldn’t be the worst thing to happen in your life. “I’m sure you’ve suffered, and I’m sorry you had to – you didn’t deserve any of it, but that doesn’t entitle you to the privilege of belittling mine,” you added, your voice softening. He maintained his perfectly poised mask you hated through your entire outburst. “I’m starting to realize now that marrying you was a mistake,” you finally declared, taking out the ring he had given you from your bag.

You wrapped your hand around his wrist, forcefully drawing it close to you, before unravelling the fingers that clutched the ring on to his palm.

“What are you doing?” he asked roughly, glaring from the ring sitting on his palm back at you with narrowed eyes. You took one last look at the blue eyes card, bringing it to your lips before letting it fall over the ring.

“If you won’t give me an annulment, I’ll file for divorce,” you informed him, opening the door to step out of the car.

“You’re not thinking straight, you’re letting your emotions get the better of you!” he declared with
a holier-than-thou tone of voice, reaching over into your seat and forcefully closing the door.

“You need emotions to live Kaiba! Yes, I am afraid of you. Rather, I’m afraid of what you’ve done in your past, because morally, I don’t know – it doesn’t tell me where you will draw your line in the future. Had you shared this with me, I’m fairly confident I would have found a way to be accepting of it, but you don’t see me as your life companion so you wouldn’t share anything! What is the point of communication if I know it’ll be met with a brick wall?” you demanded to know, his face hovering inches away from yours as he continued holding on to your door handle.

You realized what you were asking for was hypocritical, and yet you felt you’ve shared so many fragments from your past and they were never reciprocated.

“Marry for love next time,” you tried advising him with a tone of conviction which betrayed you by cracking, as you made to push past him to reach the door handle.

“I did, this time,” he declared in a deep voice unexpectedly, pushing you against your seat, forcefully crushing his lips into yours.

You struggled in vain, desperately trying to push him away against his shoulders. He didn’t falter, continuing to kiss you demandingly. You needed to breathe, so you started hitting your fists against him.

By the time he pulled away, you were on the verge of suffocation, your lips parted, gasping for air.

“Stay with me,” he demanded panting, “I misspoke.”

You still had your head turned up to the roof, desperately struggling for air. Regardless of what you thought of him, you couldn’t deny how intoxicating his kisses were. He moved a few strands of hair away from your face as he watched you, his features creased with seriousness.

When you caught your breath and you could finally bring your chest to stop rising and falling erratically, you thought over his words.

“You’ll only continue to treat me like a child.”

“It’s not disrespectfully done. You’re younger than my little brother, it’s habit,” he spoke slowly, almost as if carefully tasting his words before letting them fall against your ears. “You’re not easy to be with.”

“I’m aware,” he said roughly. You could tell those words had offended him, though perhaps hurt was a better word, but you found it hard to convince yourself that this man was capable of feeling pain.

“But you’ve made me feel safe, and… I think… if I knew more about you, I would feel that way about you again,” you spoke hesitantly, looking at the hands on your lap.

His fingers wrapped around your chin, forcing you to look up at him.

“If there’s ever something you think I shouldn’t do, as long as that’s a decision that won’t hurt you, I won’t do it against your wishes,” he informed you, his lips brushing against yours as he spoke.

You knew those words would have many, many exceptions to their parameters but somehow it felt enough, at least until he was ready to spare more details about himself to you.

You nodded against his lips, hoping this was the right decision.
He pulled back a few inches, hand reaching for your left, as he slipped the ring back on to your ring finger, before sitting back in his seat.

You continued to maintain your gaze on the floor as he started the car back up.

“I’m going back to work, where do you want me to drop you off?”

“Do you mind if I come along?” You didn’t have any schedules that required you to be out of the office that day, so you would be in your office catching up on proposals and other operational things for your company anyway. “I’ll work quietly from your office, I won’t distract you.”

“You being present is a distraction,” he smirked. You weren’t sure if that was him refusing, but he didn’t say anymore for a while. “Do you need to pick up anything from your company?”

“Just my laptop.”

...

As you walked across the lobby of Kaiba Corp. with Seto beside you, a deadly silence fell over everyone, as they all bowed ninety degrees as if programmed clockwork, eyes casted down towards the ground. You stopped for a moment, mind failing to process what was unfolding before you.

Seto looked back at you; his scowl more prominent than it was when he was alone with you.

“What are you doing standing around?” he growled under his breath, reaching for your wrist to drag you forward.

Were people this terrified of him? So much so that not one would even dare make eye contact with him?

“Do your employees always act like this when you walk by?”

You couldn’t help your curiosity. He looked down at you as he walked, expression distorting to one that conveyed mild confusion.

“Like what?” Was he so accustomed to it that he didn’t even notice?

“Nothing, forget I said anything.” His reaction to your question had told you plenty.

...

You worked sitting on the grey sofa in his office, occasionally glancing over at him as he worked. You had a lot more reports than you had realized this morning to catch up on.

No more than half an hour could have passed before Seto stalked over to the set of sofas and started dragging one of the rather large chairs that was facing you towards his desk.

“What are you doing?” you inquired in confusion, standing up.
He spoke after he was finished pushing the grey chair against the glass wall a few feet to the left of his desk, so that it was sitting slightly behind his own chair.

“You’re being distracting,” he spoke irritated, scowling.

“I haven’t done anything!”

“Just sit in the damn chair.”

You complied, not entirely sure what you had done that was so disturbing, though you had to admit, the view was disappointing, you could hardly see his side profile and when he turned to his computer, all you could see was the back of his head. Of course not being able to see out of the window was upsetting also.

You worked like that for a few hours until Seto had a meeting to attend, before which his secretary entered the office – the tolerable one with dark hair – and took your lunch orders.

Lunch arrived as Seto returned from the meeting. You picked up your salad and your jasmine tea and tried to retreat back to your chair.

“You’re not eating enough,” Seto noted flatly as his secretary was unpacking his lunch on his desk, picking up his side soup-dish and pushing it towards you, much to shock of his secretary.

“Do you realize how many calories are in that?” you dismissed.

“Get her something else that she can eat,” he ordered his secretary. Your protests fell on deaf ears.

You both ate your lunches in silence, continuing to work before his secretary returned with a smoked salmon type bowl that you really weren’t in the mood to be eating.

You picked at it for a good hour before approaching his desk with the empty salad container and the unfinished salmon bowl, trying to sneak the containers into the garbage can under his desk without being noticed.

“You didn’t finish that did you?” he asked without even turning away from his computer screen to look.

You closed your eyes shut for a moment at being busted, before trying to locate the exact position of the bin when his hand grabbed yours. There was a knock at his door distracting him momentarily and you took the opportunity to release the containers into the bin, after making sure that it was right below your hand.

“Come in,” Seto called out to whoever, shooting you a glare as you looked up, straightening your back.

A couple of middle aged men entered the room, one in dress shirt and trousers and the other in a lab coat. Seto released your arm as the men reached his desk and you promptly made yourself scarce, returning back to your chair.

“Level three of the game is ready to be tested, sir,” you heard the man in the lab coat inform.

“I see, all the bugs have been written out of the code?” Seto inquired, his voice assuming a hostile, almost icy tone. He applied himself to the conversation with those men with such a frigid calm that you understood the way his employees had acted the way they did earlier that morning. He was effectively destroying their composure without sparing so much as a word. His silence in itself was chilling.
“Yes, sir, and the animations have been redone for the clothing. We requested a designer from a well-known clothing brand to have them designed,” the other man offered an open file which you assumed contained the clothing designs.

You didn’t care to observe much more and focused back on your own reports.

“You’re a woman and somewhat a westerner,” you suddenly heard Seto calling your name, “what do you think of this?” he asked as he inspected the designs pensively.

You stifled a laugh at the brutally honest way he had asked for your opinion before walking up to his desk.

Casually setting down the lipstick smudged tea on his desk, you leaned over his shoulder, not paying much mind to how closely you were standing next to him, too absorbed in the task at hand.

You hadn’t noticed how the expressions of the two individuals in front of you had contorted at this.

“You’re designs are barely tolerable,” you spoke bluntly without thinking, “except if you were going for a theme in your game, some of these dresses are based on the Georgian period while the rest is based off of Victorian fashion. The two periods are consecutive to each other, except the fashion is drastically different. Now taking into consideration the title, which refers to the Middle Ages, these designs are about two hundred years off.”

Looking up to observe the man who had presented the file, you noticed him swallowing visibly as he anticipated in dread the incoming –for a lack of a better word – shit storm that Seto was about to deliver. You mildly felt apologetic at how you had torn down the proposal.

You heard Seto growling in annoyance under his breath, flipping through the rest of the pages, as he reached for your cup you had put down. He brought it to his lips as he read through the other notes, while drinking the tea. He set it back down before running his thumb across his lips, probably assuming that some of your lipstick had gotten on him, which it hadn’t.

“It’s cold,” he noted to you with a hint of displeasure in his tone as he continued reading.

“It’s been two hours since I got it.”

Again, you didn’t register the look the two men shared at the suggested intimacy of Seto’s actions, dismissing it as a nervous reaction.

Knowing how this situation would unfold, you swiftly excused yourself out of the room, leaving the two poor souls at Seto’s mercy.

Returning to the office, you were informed by his secretaries that Seto was out inspecting some virtual reality game that you couldn’t remember the name of, probably the same one he was discussing earlier in the office.

You resumed your position back on your chair, hoping to actually get some work done this time around.

…

You couldn’t be sure when you had fallen asleep, but you woke up to the steady rhythm of continuous typing. The way your body was oriented felt weird; as if you were lying upright on your
side, with your face twisted downwards, while your legs were slung over something. You could feel heaviness weighing down your shoulders.

You turned your face towards the light, lifting your eyelids still heavy with sleep. You looked up to see Seto’s face. He momentarily stopped typing, turning away to look down at you as you stirred, his face brushing against yours as he did.

Evening sunlight was pouring in through the wall of glass behind you, colouring the room in shades of dark pinks and oranges dancing over dark shadows. You were still sitting in the grey chair against the windows, but the last you remembered, you were in the office alone.

You slowly realized that you were leaning against Seto on his lap, with your legs over his thighs, your face buried in his neck. You wondered how he had managed to slip under you without waking you up; you hadn’t fancied yourself a heavy sleeper.

“When did you – how did you –” you stuttered, trying to find the words to ask all your questions at once.

“What time is it?” you asked groggily. It still felt awkward being this close to him following the complication this morning, but he seemed to have no reservations.

“Past six”

He tightened the arm around you, bending over to set his laptop on the floor with his right hand, before sliding down slightly against the chair, almost assuming a lying position. All that ridiculously fast typing was done with one hand? You were impressed.

You lifted your left arm out of what you understood was his suit blazer draped around your shoulders, and placed it against his chest as you shifted into a more comfortable position against him.

Still mostly leaning against the backrest of the chair, he tilted his head down, taking your lips in his. You hesitantly closed your eyes, obliging. His kiss was demanding still, but more so soothing than it had been that morning. You slanted your head up slightly to allow him a better angle.

Breaking away for air, it felt as if he was piercing your soul with how his blue eyes insisted on reading your every expression as if seeing your face for the very first time. It was on the verge of being unnerving. You were debating on whether you should ask him what he was thinking or stand up to leave but you couldn’t seem to pull your gaze away from his, following his eyes as it traced you as if hypnotized.

He suddenly reached into the inner pocket of his coat draped over you, his eyes never leaving you, and pulled out something concealed by his fingers wrapped around it.

His left hand behind you reached around to yours, slightly pressing you against him as he did, taking it by the wrist and twisting it so your palm was facing up. His right hand hovered over it for a moment, before placing something in your hand and wrapping your fingers around it.

His stern countenance persisting.

You looked down at your fingers, opening them up to reveal his blue eyes card.

“I won’t give it to you again,” he advised harshly.
You didn’t think there would even be a second time, especially after how severely things had escalated before taking a nose dive to hell that morning.

You continued to stare at it, fingers gently holding it as if it would disintegrate at the slightest pressure. Wrapped up in all your conflicting emotions of relief and surprise at having received that card again along with confusion considering how to reciprocate the gesture, you were oblivious to your brows knitting in concentration.

“You look displeased.”

You were caught slightly off guard by his sharp perception.

“No, I just wish I had something to give you, but I’ve only ever owned the one duel monsters card.”

“Do you play duel monsters?” he inquired, suddenly intrigued.

“I know the basic rules, yes. I’ve never owned a deck. Just the one card.”

“What was it, your card?”

“Sword of revealing light, I got it when I first came to Japan ten years ago, when I was eleven. What it stood for meant a lot to me. It felt so unattainable for me at the time, that kind of light and power. It was just a card, you probably think I’m crazy,” you dismissed. You had gotten carried away; though you hoped that sort of transparency would inspire a similar impulse in him.

“I don’t.” …Or maybe not. Maybe not right away, you tried telling yourself.

You couldn’t help but notice the tone of conviction he had validated your opinion with, it spoke further into convincing you that the card you were holding in your hands was much more valuable to the man next to you than you could possibly fathom.

Wanting to sincerely redo your actions from that morning, you raised yourself up slightly, wrapping your right arm around his neck, while the left continued to carefully guard the card, holding it against his chest, you brushed your lips along his. He complied, leaning down and capturing your lips in a kiss, before his hands began to wander.

His right hand wandered under the coat he had draped over you, shedding it to the ground, before travelling up your neck as he kissed you. His fingers tangled themselves in your hair, his thumb against your cheek.

He pulled away momentarily to catch his breath before replacing his hand along your neck with his lips, the hand wrapped behind you found its way to your hair, supporting you, while his right hand landed on your knee. He traced his right hand along the inside of your thigh, massaging it roughly.

As his fingers continued to massage you, his lips kissed you along your neck, occasionally biting down on your sensitive spots. A moan escaped your lips as he nipped at your skin.

He pulled away to look at you, smirking, before lowering his lips over yours again. He attacked them hungrily, taking your entire bottom lip in his mouth, biting it.

“Take me,” you told him breathlessly, his lips brushing against yours when he pulled away.

“I’m not going to give you your first time in my office,” he replied panting.
You hadn’t taken him to be the sentimental type, but perhaps you should have.

“Then take me home,” you offered.

He let out a low guttural laugh. You wondered if it was a little too forward asking for sex even if it was from your husband.

“You don’t want me,” you said, getting up from his lap. You hadn’t meant that with any seriousness, only saying it because you were momentarily upset at being rejected.

Brushing down your dress, you made to walk away, when you heard him sigh in frustration behind you. You felt his hand wrap around your wrist before standing up and forcefully leading you out of the office.

“I told you not to tempt me. I’ll give you what you want.”
Seduction Is Easy

Chapter Notes

I'm seriously on the verge of giving up on this story. I don't know why this chapter even happened. Something ridiculous like 4000 characters too...

Reading the comments, I am really, really sorry for the anticipation coming in from last chapter. This is like the slowest burn versions of all smut, ever, if that makes sense. Literally never written smut before this story. I wondered to myself what I was thinking having included a smut tag and I continued to question my life choices throughout writing this. I quite honestly have no idea what I did. Sorry it sucks – no pun intended. Thank you for putting up with me for the past twenty chapters. Enjoy.

*Edit: Just to clarify, not that I hate story as a whole, I just have a weird relationship with this particular chapter, hopefully it still maintained the tone at least somewhat.

He threw you against the far wall of the elevator at the end of his office, your back arching at the impact, the cool metal pricking at your skin. You could feel your nipples harden as a wave of goosebumps swept your skin.

Stepping in without sparing you a moment to react, his hands traced down your arms, sending another wave of shivers down your spine, before pinning your wrists with one hand, above your head. He pressed himself against you, shoving his hips into yours, knee between your thighs, as he wrapped his fingers around your chin, forcing your neck to arch up to meet his lips.

You could see his blue eyes change, carnal desire burning through his usually composed gaze. As the doors closed, the space felt considerably smaller. Each breath and pant could be heard echoing back against the walls of the small space.

He brushed his lips over yours before crushing against them, kissing you roughly, demanding all of you. Biting down on your lip, he let his teeth sink into the inside of your bottom lip, moving his head just slightly, enough to lock eyes with you possessively, as he continued to suck and nip at it. His gaze conveyed dominance.

His mere scent was intoxicating, his gaze weakening your knees. His free hand wandered down to your thigh, fingers massaging up your inner thigh until it reached the lace of your panties. He released your lip momentarily as his fingers searched for your folds over the fabric. His lips back against yours, he traced the outline of them with his tongue, and his fingers began stroking your folds teasingly, as he grinded his hips against you.

You bit back a moan.

You could feel his hardness against you. He moved his lips to brush against your ear, his panting breaths tickling them.

“You’re mine,” he declared raggedly, before dipping his tongue into your ear. You shuddered at the sudden sensation of wetness. You could feel his lips smirking against your ear as he traced them to your earlobe, tugging at it with his teeth.
He pulled away to look over your trembling state, intently studying your reddened lips, flustered cheeks and undone hair plastered across your face. In your overwhelmed state, you faintly registered his smirk deepen before he turned his face to the other side of your neck, tongue tracing up the side before drawing the skin around your sensitive spot into his mouth, intensely sucking on it; your bound fingers flexing at the sensation.

His fingers continued to pleasure you over your underwear, plunging them into your folds with increasing aggression; your juices flowing out to meet his long fingers against the fabric.

Having your hands and your body bound as pleasure pulsed through you was torment. The combined sensation of his mouth on your neck and his fingers against your wetness caused you to release a strained moan, as your knees buckled under you.

He pulled away, releasing your arms as the elevator doors reopened, your weakened legs refusing to hold you. He slipped an arm around your waist to stop you from slipping down the elevator wall, blue eyes sinking into yours dangerously as he supported your weight walking you to the car.

Seto always drove very erratically, and yet somehow, this was a new level of insanity, even for him. Your fingers dug into his upper arm as he tore down the road, fearing your life. As his speed was forced to come to a standstill, meeting the tail end of rush hour traffic, you heard him growl impatiently under his breath, and his left hand found its way to your right knee.

Ghosting his fingers up your leg, caressing it, his hand slipped under the fabric of your skirt. You heard a bitten back grunt escape his lips as his fingers found your wet folds again.

“People can see!” you scolded in a hushed whisper, pressing your knees together.

“The windows are tinted, no one’s watching,” he dismissed huskily through gritted teeth, plunging a finger into you against the lace, you clenched, biting back a moan again. This apparently wasn’t satisfying to him. You heard him grunt in irritation as his fingers balled into a fist around the fabric, tearing it away from you. You arched your back, groaning in pain. You could feel your skin burning where the fabric was ripped away from you.

Discarding the black lace against the floor of his car, his fingers swiftly found their way back to your inner thighs. His fingers played with your wetness before his fore and middle finger reached in, parting your lips, one finger diving into you. Your head fell back as a long drawn out moan escaped you, your legs reflexively snapping closed against his hands.

“Spread your legs,” he growled as he drove the car forward with his right hand over the steering wheel, while his left hand continued to be buried deep inside you. Eyes hardened with lust but never once leaving the road.

You whimpered as his fingers applied pressure against your nub, despite the restricted range of motion caused by your closed legs.

“Open them!” he demanded.

You couldn’t bring yourself to, as you felt yourself tremble at his touch. He groaned in frustration again, using the hand he had locked between your legs to forcefully separate your thighs. He dipped a finger back into you and you clenched your thigh muscles to stop them from closing on him again, sliding down a little with your back stiffly arched against your seat. The friction his long finger created as it slowly sunk into your inner folds was maddening.

This was only intensified by him increasing his speed. Your loud, incoherent moans filled the car at the electricity his finger built up in you. Having never experienced such a sensation before, your
right hand gripped his shirt so tightly that the blood drained from your knuckles.

You could feel your heart stuttering, your breath caught in your throat, and you could hear blood coursing against your ears.

Your eyes looked up at him pleadingly, a mewl escaping your parted lips, to be met with blue ones that held no mercy.

He plunged a second finger into you, forcing you to call out his name as you writhe under his touch. Your chest rose and fell erratically.

“I’m soaking into your seat,” you whimpered as you felt your juices dripping down your bare skin.

“I’ll have it cleaned.”

In the front seat of his car, you unraveled completely against the touch of his fingers, which slipped in and out of you at an increasing speed, sinking deeper and deeper each time.

You continued to cry out his name, begging for him to allow your overwhelmed senses to rest, all the while wishing for him to continue.

“Have you never touched yourself?” he asked almost incredulously, looking over at your undone state as he continued to drive. You hadn’t, but there was a certain embarrassment in admitting that to your husband, despite what the answer was. You could tell by the look in his eye as he turned his attention back to the road that he had read right through you.

You could feel fire pooling in your lower abdomen and lightening travel through your inner thighs at the building pressure. You arched your hips into his fingers instinctively as you felt yourself reaching your limit, but he pulled his fingers away, one thrust away from sending you over the edge. You whimpered at the emptiness he left in you.

“Pull yourself together, we are here,” he suddenly informed you coldly, causing you to look over the dashboard to see the gates of the manor nearing.

You pushed your legs together, weakly pulling yourself up in your seat and straightened out your dress, trying your best to breathe somewhat normally as the car drove past the guarded gates, though one look at your flushed face with hair glued all over with sweat would give you away.

When he walked around opening your door, you were still mildly gasping for air.

He slipped his arms under your shoulders, lifting you up, as you reflexively wrapped your legs around his waist. He let out a small, strained, almost dark laugh as your eyes met, one hand reaching up to move a strand of hair sticking against your dampened forehead out of the way, almost as if inspecting his work with great satisfaction.

Walking into the bedroom while still carrying you wrapped around his hips, he locked the door behind him.

He looked you dead in the eye, licking his lips before crushing them against you. He reached one hand down to the ribbons of your shoes, untying them, letting them drop to the floor, one at a time.

He continued to roll his lips over yours, sucking your bottom lip into his mouth, hand slipping around to your back, undoing the zipper of your dress. Your dress fell to the crook of your elbows, pooling around your waist. You could tell his patience was nearing its limit. He spared no time in reaching around for the hook of your bra, expertly unclasping it and discarding it across the room,
all the while never leaving your lips.

He adjusted you against his waist, lifting you, before slamming you against the bedroom wall, as he tilted his head downwards to your left breast, taking it in his mouth, rolling his tongue over your hardened nipple. Your hands found his hair as you threw your head up at the ceiling, a strained moan left your swollen lips. He flicked his tongue across your nipple, swirling around it, drawing out moan after moan from you as he grinded himself into you.

He briefly moved his mouth against your other nipple, before he parted from your breasts, leaving your nipples slick with his saliva as he looked up at your sweating form. He let out a satisfied chuckle as he covered your lips with his again.

He spun you away from the wall, placing you on the ground, allowing your dress to pool at your feet.

There was an implied dirtiness in standing completely naked against his clothed form as he kissed you.

You reached for his loosened tie, undoing it entirely, letting it fall to the floor. He lifted you against his waist again, shoving his hips in an upwards motion against you as he sucked on the skin of your neck, nipping at it harshly. You could already feel the soreness forming into bruises.

You mewled as he trailed down to your collarbones, leaning you back slightly, biting against your collarbones. Your fingers searched for the buttons of his shirt, managing to undo the first few before he threw you down on the bed.

Your back arched slightly as it fell against the white sheets, lips parting as the air was knocked out of you. He loomed over you, his knees between your thighs, your legs spread apart in front of him. He leaned over you, arms caging your sides, as he traced his lips from your collarbones down to your stomach, sucking on your skin and tracing his teeth over your faintly visible ribs. He dipped his tongue into your belly bottom, eliciting a gasp from you at the sensation before pulling up to look at you.

He continued to attack the side of your neck while you fumbled with the remaining buttons of his shirt, before he pulled it off of him. He undid his pants and discarded them to the floor irritably before you could even reach them.

“You’re slow,” he snarled.

You could feel anxiety building up as you worried whether you would be able to please him if you were falling below his expectations already.

Through the fabric of his boxer briefs, you could see his bulge, visibly protruding. Your eyes shifted from it to meet his blue ones hovering inches from yours, swallowing nervously at the realization of his size.

“What’s wrong, my dear?” Seto drawled darkly in your ear, tauntingly. “Isn’t this what you wanted?”

He forced you by your wrist to wrap your fingers around his bulge, a suppressed grunt escaping against your earlobe. You hesitantly applied pressure against it, gasping as you somewhat felt his size for the first time. You wondered if you would regret your decision.
“Don’t do that,” he snapped at you in a strained tone as your fingers massaged him. He pulled your hand away as he leaned down over your lips, kissing you roughly.

You tried kissing him back but he demanded more, his bare chest pressing against your bare breasts, you could feel the air leaving you. He pulled your knees up with his hands, tilting your hips up as he grinded his covered erection against your exposed folds. Your senses were already overwhelmed.

Motioning to pull away, instead he paused with his lips brushing against yours, forcing you to breathe each other’s air. A lightheaded sensation washed over you. Your hands splayed across his back, you couldn’t see straight anymore.

The man in front of you was nothing short of a piece of art, and the mere thought of him giving himself to you, just the image of him buried in you sent your senses into overdrive.

“Seto…” you moaned out his name.

“What am I going to do if you’re already like this?” he teased, lust weighing down his voice.

His lips against your neck, ears, breasts, his fingers playing at your wetness, you couldn’t form a tangible thought, your mind wasn’t registering anything but the pleasure shooting through from where his lips and fingers touched you. You weren’t sure when he had taken off his briefs.

In your state of desperate arousal, through the blood roaring in your ears, which spilled into your cheeks, and pulsed through every inch of your body, you forced your eyes; heavy lidded with lust to peer up at your husband.

Seeing his exposed erection for the first time offered you a mixture of excitement and absolute terror, the latter greatly overshadowing the former. You hadn’t previously –prior to today – spared any thought to his size, and being faced with his incredible length caused you to question your own capacities.

“I can’t do this,” you suddenly blurted out weakly, his blue eyes darting up to yours with a mixture of mild surprise and extreme irritation. “That’s – I’m – it’s never going to fit in me,” you stuttered disjointedly, a frightened edge to your tone. This turned his annoyed glare into an unsettling smirk.

“That’s for me to deal with,” he panted roughly, pulling your hand up to stroke his length. Your hands reflexively recoiled as you touched it, before he forcefully wrapped your fingers around his impressive girth.

He held your gaze, blue eyes smouldering with desire as they bore in to you, his hand guiding yours up and down his erection, biting back grunts through gritted teeth at your touch, as you slowly found your own pace to pleasure him. Your breathing spiked at this motion.

You realized your eyes must have reminded your husband of a lost doe or something of the sort. Your utter lack of experience was evident as you lay there somewhat mortified, your hand unsurely running up and down your husband’s length. You weren’t sure what you had to do next, if you were doing it right, where your hands had to be or what you had to say and you were terribly afraid of disappointing him.

“That’s enough,” he commanded, pulling your fingers away from him after a few moments. You winced at the way he cut you off.

He brought one hand down to his cock, positioning himself to enter you, as he placed his lips over yours.
“I’m scared,” you whispered breathless, pulling away, fingers digging past his bare shoulders. His brows knitted together as he pulled up to look over you.

“Don’t be.”

“Will it hurt?” He looked at you almost worriedly for a moment before composing himself.

“I’ll make it worth it,” he panted.

You squeezed your eyes shut, anticipating the worst.

“You need to relax,” he growled, “or it’s going to hurt a lot more.”

You tried your best to comply. All that was running across your mind was that you weren’t ready, and yet you wanted him so much.

He placed his hands under your knees, tilting them up at an angle as he forced his entire length into you in one rough thrust. You weren’t nearly relaxed enough and you clenched around him as he entered. A sharp sensation shot from where he entered up your abdomen and you arched your rib cage to meet his chest, crying out his name.

You felt hot tears pricking you at what you just experienced, before flowing down the corners of your eyes. You heard him groan.

“Fuck, you’re so tight,” he rasped, clenching his jaw.

He pulled out of you, and you made the mistake of lifting your head to watch as he slowly sunk himself back in to you. Your breath caught in your throat and your heart palpitated. You weren’t entirely sure if visually witnessing that had made the sensation more excruciating, as you threw your head back instinctively.

“Seto, it hurts,” you managed in almost an inaudible whisper, tightening your fingers around his shoulders.

He leaned over you in response, forcing you to stretch your arms above your head, running his fingers across your palms, before lacing his fingers through yours.

“It’ll get better,” he husked in your ear, as he began to thrust into you continuously.

His lips ravenously kissed along the side of your neck, nipping at the soft skin, his hips continually pounding his cock deeper and deeper into you.

As you writhe under him, you could start feeling the pain subside with each plunge. Your heart rate spiked as pleasure washed over you, drowning your senses.

“Seto…yes,” you moaned his name in ecstasy. He had released your hands and you splayed them across his back.

“That’s my girl,” he declared possessively.

He increased his pace groaning; pushing his hips against you harder each time, slamming into you as he fucked you with an intensity and speed you struggled to keep up with. Your nails dug into his back, raking them across, over and over.

“Oh god…oh god yes…Seto…oh god,” you repeatedly cried out, your back arching into him desperately.
Whenever you had imagined your first time, never in your wildest dreams did you think that it would be with Seto Kaiba, and yet here you were losing yourself to him.

His muscular arms caging you, you unravelled completely against him, your thoughts scattering, forgetting how to speak; disintegrating into a mess of incoherent babbling.

Your body flushed all over, covered in a sheen of sweat, hair plastered against your face, desperately calling out his name, you were entirely unaware of how badly this aroused Seto.

“Call my name again, I want to hear you screaming it,” he demanded darkly, sweat drenching his brown hair, as he ran his tongue over your collarbone, licking away your salty sweat.

“Seto, please….yes, Seto,” you cried out.

As he thrust into you, he pressed against one particular spot and you immediately saw stars. Your entire body lurched upwards, hands shooting up from his back and tangling themselves in his hair, gripping him tightly.

“Fuck,” you heard him call out in response.

“Seto…yes...right there…” you whimpered as he complied, grinding against that spot over and over again.

The sound of flesh hitting flesh married with loud panting, rough groaning and incoherent moans filled the large room.

Trying –and failing – to match his ridiculous pace, shockwaves of pleasure rippled through your body from the friction he created with his movement inside you, and you could feel your entire body shudder.

“Seto, hold me, I can’t I need…” you begged in broken tangents, no longer able to control how your body trembled from within. He leaned down over you, slipping the hands he had caging you under your back, embracing you tightly, your bodies slick with sweat rubbing against each other, his defined abs pressing against your protruding ribs as he continued to pound into you.

His hot breath back at your ear, his erection filling all of you, you felt as if you had forgotten how to breathe. You could hear your juices squelching against his cock each time he slammed into you.

“I need you, harder,” you moaned in your utterly undone state, his groans against your ears sending you over the edge.

“That’s my girl,” he husked again, and you could only respond in nonsensical gibberish at how his words made you feel.

The friction in your lower abdomen built into an unbearable, splintering electricity that threatened to burst. You could feel his cock pulsating against your walls, as they clenched around him. You toes curled, fingers pulling his hair. The feeling of a spring coiling tightly could be felt in your stomach, and you were starting to see your vision fading to white.

“Seto I’m – I don’t think I can, for much longer—”

He continued to come in hard on you, steadily increasing his pace. He pressed his lips against your forehead in the most tender kiss he had ever given you and you could feel the sweat dripping down on to your face from the ends of his hair, as he lowered his forehead against yours.

“Hold on a little longer,” he requested between uneven panting.
“I can’t,” you whimpered “I—” but you couldn’t finish.

You thought time had come to a standstill.

You felt as though streams of fire were burning through your veins, rippling through every bone and muscle, exploding as it reached your nerve endings.

“Seto!” you called out his name in a long, drawn out cry. Your vision completely fading to white and blank noise drowning out your hearing, you could only distantly feel Seto’s hips rolling against you.

You felt as though you moaned out a string of profanities mixed in with your husband’s name as you dissolved into a pool of ecstasy, but you couldn’t be sure.

Your mind wouldn’t process anything for a few moments.

You heard your name being called a few times before you became responsive again.

“Are you alright?” you heard your husband growl through gritted teeth, blue eyes intently studying you from inches above.

As you lay limp, trying to remember the words to form a response, arms fallen over the sheets, Seto seemed to be nowhere near his climax.

“I’m sorry,” you managed between choppy breaths.

“For?”

“I couldn’t keep up with you.”

“I never expected you to,” he smirked.

He continued for a while longer, fingers moving the hair that fell in your face from his body moving against you.

Eventually you felt his breathing becoming shallow, as he started losing his earlier, steady rhythm, working his hips against you erratically, panting heavily over your face. Sweat continued to fall from the tips of his hair and his chin on to your face, mixing together with yours as they pooled between your collarbones.

He called out your name in strained groans.

“Fuck,” he repeated raggedly. You forced your hands up to cup his face, fingers disappearing into his hair.

You sensed him clench all his muscles, his arms around you tightening to the point you felt crushed in his embrace before you felt him pulsate one last time inside you.

“I love you,” you whispered in his ear, sending him over the edge. He swore loudly again before releasing himself into you, grunting your name. You could feel his warmth spilling inside you, filling you.

He collapsed over you while still buried deep inside you, his face against the crook of your neck, panting.
You could start to feel the pressure between your legs dissipating into soreness.

“Have I given enough of myself to you yet?” he inquired panting.
This is just fluff, some relationship study but mostly fluff. There’s so much plot, completely unexplored plot to get to and I just don’t even know how to make that transition so today you get this. I’ll try for one with more substance tomorrow.

Enjoy!

You woke up to the feeling of your lower half pulsating with a dull ache. For a moment you couldn’t feel anything below your waist, before you felt a mixture of soreness and numbness and you tried to recall what had happened. Peeling your tired eyes open, you were faced with your husband’s toned abs, your head leaning against his outstretched arm.

He was watching over you, already awake as always. White sheets draped over both of you.

“Seto, it hurts,” you winced, looking up into his blue eyes.

“What hurts?” he inquired gruffly. You held your eyes shut for a second as you felt a sharp, aching sensation jolt through your lower pelvis. You watched a dark grin stretching across his lips as realization dawned on him.

“That’s not funny,” you whined, somewhat annoyed by his reaction, slapping his chest, as you felt your inner thighs twitch slightly.

“No, it’s good to know I did some damage last night,” he smirked. “Don’t worry it’s nothing serious, it’ll wear off,” he dismissed as he turned you to face away from him, before pulling you against his chest. You could feel his lower half pressing against you also, and despite the extent of the intimacy you had just shared, you felt heat rising to your face, electricity twisting in your gut.

“I’m glad that’s over with,” he whispered in your ear from behind you. What? You could feel disappointment washing over you.

“Did I disappoint you with how I did?” you blurted out before you could stop yourself, looking over your shoulder at him, forehead creased with horror.

He let out a low, guttural laugh that brought on goosebumps.

“No,” he purred, “it means I don’t have to hold back anymore, and I won’t.”

Your face twisted with confusion, not properly understanding how to accept that comment. If anything, your mind was still hanging on to his previous comment.

“You… didn’t care that I gave you my first time?”

“Don’t be idiotic, of course it mattered to me. I also knew you’d be sentimental about it like this. I just don’t have to be so concerned going forward. And you did well, much better than I was expecting, for someone dubbed the Nation’s Fairy especially.” There was an implied tone of mockery in that added comment about your title. “Asking for it too”
At first you felt slightly mortified, and so you couldn’t entirely comprehend why you also felt happiness at hearing those words, in fact you thought it a little strange to be that content over your husband appraising your sexual performance –especially with the tone he did – and yet you couldn’t help but feel elated.

You allowed yourself to sink a little more against him.

You felt his hand that was draped over you ghosting down your waist towards your thighs.

“I just told you it hurts!” you snapped. You couldn’t see his face but you just knew he was smirking. His hand found its way back around your waist. “What time is it?” you asked after a few moments of silence.

“I don’t know I left my phone back at my office.”

You groaned, great, that meant he forgot yours too. You couldn’t get past The Great Seto Kaiba actually forgetting something. The fact that what he had forgotten was related to his work made it all the more surprising. You bit back your sarcastic response.

“You should really have a wall clock put up in your bedroom,” you declared.

“It’s your bedroom too, do it yourself.”

You were simultaneously mildly irritated and oddly content at that remark. It felt almost as if he had permanently accepted you to be a part of his life. You wondered if you had done the same.

“I will,” you decided to take it in stride.

“The watch you gave me should be on your nightstand, hand it over.”

You looked up to see it against the crystal lamp. You wondered how it was sitting there as you retrieved it for him, returning to lay on your back with the sheets over your chest. He was leaning slightly against you, propped up on his elbow, sheets fallen away to his waist.

“I took it off last night while you were taking too long,” he explained, convincing you that he did indeed possess the ability to read minds. He also possessed the remarkable ability of making even the simplest exchanges of dialogue insulting. “It’s three in the morning. You need to eat something.”

“I don’t feel like it.”

“It wasn’t a suggestion that required your input.” Rude.

And just like that, he was back to his unnervingly composed, unfeeling self again, any forms of tenderness that had been present moments ago had completely melted away, or rather frozen over.

You bit back the urge to ask him to go fuck himself as you turned on your side again, repeating to yourself that his reminder was in the best interest of your health.

You felt his body heat that radiated against your back disappear and you couldn’t help but feel slightly annoyed.

He reappeared in front of you moments later in a black dressing robe over loose pants.

“Get up,” he commanded, looking down at you.
You didn’t think ‘I don’t want to’ would be an answer he would accept given how the last exchange had transpired, so you unwillingly pulled yourself up, wrapping the sheets around you and pushed your legs over the edge of the bed.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, you could feel the pain becoming more prominent as your previously equally distributed weight fell entirely on your lower back for support.

You winced and you didn’t think it went unnoticed by your husband. Still, you didn’t think much of it beside accumulated soreness from lying in the same attitude for an extended period of time.

Stepping off the bed, you walked a couple of steps before a sensation akin to an intensified pull of gravity dragging you down overtook your legs and your knees gave out underneath you, propelling you forward on to the ground.

You didn’t quite make impact with the marble as a pair of arms slung under your shoulders, suspending you inches before the floor. A strained cry escaped your lips as lightening shot through your legs from your lower abdomen.

It was similar to what one would experience following intense exercise after being sedentary for an extended period of time; the trembling weakness in the thighs, reduced control over the knees due to a feeling of unbearable weight resting on it, soreness paralyzing the entire lower body and so on.

You could also feel cramps knotting in your abdomen as your husband supported you on your feet, which more honestly described was you ungracefully falling against him. “I didn’t think I actually broke you,” he taunted sarcastically.

You didn’t think your current agony was something to feel triumphant about.

“You need to walk it off or you’re going to make it worse on yourself tomorrow,” he countered coldly. You hadn’t expected him to carry you, you reminded yourself at the sting of that comment.

You groaned remembering that you had a variety show filming that required you to be running around all day tomorrow. Your knees buckled at the mere thought of it, forcing Seto to lock his elbows as he countered the pull of gravity, holding you up.

He helped you replace the sheet around you with your rose dressing gown before helping to support your weight as you walked; all the while being fully aware he was feeling smug with pride at what he had made of you. The asshole.

There may have been some truth in his words, as by the time you had walked down three flights of stairs and many, many long hallways to the dining area of the kitchen, you were able to hold yourself with only some minor trembling. This in turn did make you wonder how much experience he’d had to have known that, but convinced yourself that was none of your business.

Your indifference should have raised red flags of concern about how you regarded him but those thoughts were lost to you.

You awkwardly hung back at the entrance of the room as Seto reached into the fridge to pull out some dishes the kitchen staff had packed into the fridge before they left for the night.

“I don’t think you’ve properly taken up your position as the lady of this household yet,” he declared while still behind the fridge door, demanding your attention back to reality.
“Pardon me?” You weren’t expecting that, at all.

“You still act like the same girl that came into the mansion when we were pretending to date. You still need me to guide you through the manor, you don’t know how many rooms this place has and I doubt you know the name of the head maid or butler.” You didn’t.

The truth of the matter was while you had come to terms with the fact that you were Seto Kaiba’s wife, you had never considered the situation far enough to realize that therefore in his household by extension, you were technically the lady of the house. Having given it a moment of thought now, it still didn’t feel… fitting. It felt like an awfully large space to fill, and hardly knowing exactly how vast this space – and especially his life in general was – it simply didn’t feel like your place to be. Becoming the lady of the house may have been a minor detail, but you understood the implications it carried.

When you thought of your relationship, you imagined a small circle that basically involved you and him. You had never evaluated your place in his life relative to his estate, or on a grander scale involving his corporation, society and the rest of the world.

“I’ve just never considered myself to be, quite honestly,” you explained in a quiet voice. You should have put more thought into that reply.

He narrowed his eyes, his voice dropping ever so slightly.

“Are you saying that by extension you’ve never considered yourself my wife?”

That hit a nerve.

There were many things that you intentionally never paused to consider, always prolonging the day you’d have to address it. This was one of them. Coming to terms with something was a small degree below emotionally accepting it, at least you felt.

“Not to be melodramatic,” he drawled crossly, “but I don’t believe my feelings for you are reciprocated.”

Ouch, another nerve, was he playing truth or trauma? It felt like he had started a game of self-doubt whack-a-mole you didn’t get an invitation to, hammering at an emotional insecurity each time he spoke. What was more surprising was the he was able to so precisely detect and address each of the things you so efficiently avoided.

The earlier concern that had crossed your mind about your husband’s history of relationships resurfaced in your mind. You were infatuated with the ideal that you needed to know everything about your husband and be possessive of him; his present as well as his past, but perhaps the reality of the situation was that you hadn’t come to accept Seto into that cookie cutter ideological ‘husband’ figure quite yet. You told yourself you did, so much so that you would sometimes force feed yourself the idea, but really, subconsciously, was that a reality you had accepted? You wanted to spend the rest of your life with him, sure, but then again so said every school girl about their high school sweetheart. Was this any different? Was he right in saying that you loved him less than he loved you?

Did you believe this was a permanent arrangement?

“You don’t think this is permanent.”
Jesus fucking Christ, this man….

Now you knew he had installed a chip in your head.

“Don’t put words in my mouth!” you finally shot back, as you pulled out a chair at the glass carved table.

He put something that resembled a pasta dish in front of you.

“The words I put seem to be the only words in your mouth lately. Eat it before it gets cold.”

“What the hell is that supposed to mean? I gave you my virginity just now! What more do you want? Why would I if I didn’t feel it was permanent?” you were trying more to convince yourself.

This whole exchange was made worse by your conscience grating against your personal -rather selfish - rationalization of the situation, as it reminded you that he was speaking the thoughts you held in denial.

“I wouldn’t be asking if I knew,” he glared back, taking a seat next to you.

You loved him, quite sincerely, so you wondered if perhaps the insecurities were a product of your doubts about how he regarded you and his unspoken past.

You just didn’t know where you fit in.

Also you realized, you didn’t want to probe and ask for something you wouldn’t receive, only to be disappointed, so you lived with the unacknowledged conviction that at the end of the day, if he did end up leaving you, at the very least, it was something you were expecting and therefore not something that would completely shatter you.

This was true for both his love and details of his past; two hugely important components of your relationship.

“You’re not eating,” he snapped, changing the topic.

You took a moment to observe what was in front of you.

“Do you know how many –”

“Calories?” he interrupted you sharply. “I don’t, and quite frankly I don’t care. You’re starting to look languid.”

Not that you ever regarded yourself out of shape, but it was strange hearing that someone thought you looked malnourished – your fans asked you to take care of yourself all the time but that was mostly superficial concern – because in the industry, you were always being asked to be thinner.

The creative director of your recent perfume campaign had told you that you could stand to lose more.

“Seto, I really can’t,” you spoke after a deep breath.

He served you a glare which you knew would have been more than sufficient in making anyone else –especially his business associates – want to disintegrate into thin air in an attempt to escape it, but at least in that moment, you were immune to it.

“Eat it or I will feed you by forcing it down your throat if I have to.”
That wasn’t a pretty picture.

“You don’t own me,” you protested immaturely.

“Are you unable to discriminate between possession and genuine concern?”

Ouch. You knew you would be having a conversation about love versus possession sometime in your relationship, just never anticipated that it would come out of his mouth.

You unwillingly picked up the fork and started eating. You weren’t adverse to the idea of eating, but during times of heightened stress, you usually experienced a loss of appetite.

“I like doing things like this with you,” your tongue slipped as Seto got up to put the dishes into the sink.

“Arguing?”

You supposed you deserved that one.

“No, regular things, eating without thirteen different maids and chefs hovering over your shoulder, putting the dishes into the sink yourself without it being whisked away from you at the dining table, things like that,” you trailed off, anxiously wondering if you had allowed your guard down too much.

“Do you have a list?” You couldn’t discern if his undertone was curiosity or ridicule.

“As a matter of fact, I do.”

“Like what?”

“Grocery shopping together, going to a night market or a fun fair together, holding hands in public…” ‘In other words, frivolous wastes of time in your book,’ you thought to yourself.

“I sometimes forget how young you are.”

“What?”

“One moment you’re asking me for sex and the next you’re asking to hold hands,” he elaborated with his lip curved upwards so faintly that it was barely noticeable.
Finally steering this back towards the plot, somewhat...

I wrote this keeping in mind that East Asia or Asia in general -at least through my own experiences - regards the early 20's right out of being a teenager to be very young and immature, thus the plot of of this chapter and the chapters to follow.

The legal age to marry in Japan without parental consent is over 20, and the reader here had just turned 21.

Please bear with the reader's poor health for now, it contributes to a core point in the plot.

Not to paint Mokuba to be a jerk, he just comes across that way from the perspective of the reader given the circumstances she's meeting him under. He will be more present in certain future chapters and he will be presented in a more endearing way.

Enjoy the calm before the storm. Yes, this is the calm.

You didn’t know if consummating your marriage was supposed to feel any different, if it was meant to afford you some form of emotional security about your sentiments regarding the relationship, because if it was, those comforts were evading you.

It felt as if after that moment, your relationship had resumed where you had previously left off, completely failing to acknowledge the significance the intimacy had in it.

Seto placed his left arm over your right knee, sliding it half way up your thigh, burying his fingers between your closed legs, thumb tightly gripping around the side; hand encircling a greater part of your thigh.

“You’re worrying.” He didn’t specify what about as his forehead creased, eyes intently on the road. It didn’t even sound like a question, more a plain observation.

“Yes.”

“What’s up?”

He expertly maneuvered the steering wheel with his right hand.

“I don’t know.” He made a humming noise at the back of his throat.

“Well whatever it is, don’t.”

Easier said than done, you mused.

You didn’t know why he felt the need to hold you like that all the way to Kaiba Corp.
You had to be in Tokyo later that morning and needed to retrieve your phone and bag that you had forgotten there the night before.

When you entered the building, it was a little past seven a.m. so as expected, with the exception of a few employees, the lobby was mostly empty and yet the moment their boss’s presence was known, without fail, each employee fell like clockwork into a deep bow. Seeing it again, it never ceased to be fascinating.

Stepping into the elevator, Seto wrapped an arm around your waist, pulling you against him. A strained moan escaped your lips as your hips made contact with him. You saw concern flash fleetingly across his eyes before he leaned over, briefly placing his lips over yours.

You weren’t sure what had brought on this sudden wave of increased affection.

Stepping out of the elevator into the long hallway that led to his office, he continued to hold you close to him.

As he tilted his head down towards you in reaction to you looking up to speak, a voice called out to him. You instinctively pulled away – or rather tried – only to find yourself firmly held in place against his side by the arm that was snaked around you.

“Mr. Kaiba.” Two business suit clad individuals bowed respectfully to Seto. You failed to recognize them.

“Can I help you gentleman?” His expression immediately transformed into one of displeasure, scowl deepening over his narrowed eyes, voice reflecting this change as it assumed a tone of thinly masked annoyance.

“We’re here regarding the upcoming launch.” You didn’t have any idea what they were referring to specifically. “Could we discuss it further in your office?”

Seto made a sound akin to a grunt. The two individuals shifted their attention to you, curiously gazing over your form.

“You know my wife,” Seto introduced you to them by your full name – your maiden name. “These are members of my board.”

He didn’t bother introducing them by their names. They offered you their hands to shake but still glued to Seto’s side; you reserved yourself to a slight bow of the head. You wouldn’t have acknowledged them further either way; you weren’t receiving a pleasant vibe from them.

“Mrs. Kaiba,” the shorter man addressed you with a hint of scorn tainting his words. “Will you be attending the Kaiba Corp. director’s banquet with Mr. Kaiba next week?”

“You must come,” the other man chimed in, “my wife is a huge fan of yours and has been dying to meet you ever since she saw your involvement with Mr. Kaiba in the news.”

“My wife has no obligation to report her schedule to you,” Seto snarled icily, interrupting before you could even process what they had meant. Seto hadn’t mentioned any banquet. You felt a small pang pricking at your chest.

Your husband pulled you past the two board members into his office.

“I’m glad you didn’t acknowledge those two,” Seto spoke as his office door closed behind you.
“How come?”

“They’re snakes,” he spat.

“I figured as much. How is it that they weren’t here when we signed our marriage contract?”

“I’m surprised you remember much from that day,” he teased. “They were away on business, but were involved in the discussion of the arrangement.”

“I see.”

“Take one of my cars to Tokyo,” he offered, as he towered over you, “They’re all bulletproof.”

“No, it’s fine, I’ll be alright.”

“Are any of your cars bulletproof?” You didn’t know – you’ve never had the occasion to need a bulletproof vehicle. No one’s had the audacity to shoot at you on the streets before. “Take the car,” he ordered as he forcefully handed you the keys, already knowing your answer.

You picked up your handbag from the drawer in his desk, checking your phone for emergencies as you did.

You almost brought yourself to ask him about the banquet, but felt here was not the best place to discuss it.

Opening the office door to the two board members eagerly waiting an audience with your husband, you nodded your head again to them, managing a rather forced politeness as you left.

“She’s just a child, what was Kaiba thinking?” you heard one board member comment as you passed by in a hushed whisper.

“They only married for money. She’s half his age, what could she possibly know about being his wife,” the other whispered back.

At first you wondered how old they believed the legal age for marriage was in Japan, before remembering that you had only just met the age requirement to marry without parental consent by a few months.

Still, intense indignation was aroused in you at how dismissively they discussed your worth. You could feel a knot forming in your throat as you tried, – and overcome with your own insecurities – failed to confront them.

You wouldn’t even tell Seto. A distant part of you felt that he would agree with what was being said, especially considering that he hadn’t mentioned the director’s banquet to you.

It bitterly came together in your mind; it made sense. A child couldn’t possibly hope to fill the role of a grown woman and that’s why you couldn’t be the lady of the house or his lady in general. Your own husband didn’t feel like you fulfilled your role. You were just some thoughtless child who was too immature to consider anything besides romantic emotions, in the process entirely overlooking the social and business obligations involved with being married to the most powerful man in Japan.

Another part of you feared you couldn’t even be your own person anymore. You wondered if you would be forced to live in the shadow of your husband’s reputation, despite how distinguished you were in your own right in Japanese society.
Amongst all these thoughts, ‘thoughtless child,’ was all you seemed to hear repeating in your head the entire day, distinctly in the voice of your step-mother.

…

Upon returning to the mansion around nine than night from your filming in Tokyo, you were advised by the butler that a guest was expecting you in the dining room.

Straightening out your flared, long fitted sleeve, jade green dress that fell just below your knees, you headed to the dining room as directed, slightly apprehensive of who was expecting your company this late at night.

“Hey sis!”

This wasn’t a greeting you were accustomed to. Eyes darting to the source of the voice, you were met with the sight of Mokuba.

“Hello Mokuba,” you returned his greeting, slightly unsure of how you were expected to formally receive your brother-in-law in Japan, though if his initial greeting was any suggestion, he wasn’t expecting any formalities from you. You forced a smile, suppressing the urge to groan in frustration. You weren’t adverse to the company of the younger Kaiba, just that leaving your schedules early your intentions had been to crawl into bed the moment you arrived back at the mansion. Last night’s strenuous activity along with today’s extensive physical activity that was required of you during the variety show filming, in combination with the emotional stress from that morning had left you feeling incredibly drained. You didn’t have the capacity to entertain guests, especially not family and even more so not someone with as much energy as Mokuba Kaiba.

“She always looks like such a lady, no matter what she wears, doesn’t she Seto?” Mokuba enthusiastically asked, turning his attention to your husband at the head of the table.

You looked down at your Prada dress, wondering if he had just complimented you or insulted your choice of clothing as you walked to take your place to the right of Seto at the table.

“Being replaced as Seto’s right hand is so bittersweet,” he continued dramatically across from you when Seto didn’t respond. “Did you hurt yourself?”

“What?”

“You’re walking as if – did you bruise your hip?”

That got Seto’s attention as he shot you a glance before turning to glare at Mokuba.

“I was on my feet all day in heels running around Tokyo for a show I was filming.” Being economical with the truth never hurt anyone, most of the time.

“That explains the walk.”

“Mokuba,” Seto growled.

“What? I just care about my new sister that’s all!” he protested.

Dinner was served and Mokuba continued to chatter away enthusiastically with your already non-
existent energy being drained from your being with every moment that passed. At some point Seto got so irritated at how you were fumbling with your knife that he tore the plate away from you as he cut your steak for you.

You failed to recognize the look of fascination and realization that washed over Mokuba’s face at this.

You stifled a yawn, desperately trying to stop your shoulders from slouching forward as you forcefully held the pleasant expression that was currently plastered on to your face. You were trained to keep up false pretenses; so much so that you were convinced that it had even fooled your husband.

“Isn’t this nice?” Mokuba piped up again. “We should get together as a family like this more often,” he declared bashfully. You were only half listening. He was a nice change of pace, just not very welcome in your space at that particular moment.

“You’re the one never in town,” Seto countered in a contrastingly sour tone.

“You’re the one that wanted me to manage the Tokyo branch. Though I’ll try to come down more often, especially now to see my sister! You should have your family join us!” This immediately drew your attention back in.

“My family?” you asked cautiously. Had Seto not told him?

“Mokuba, that’s enough.”

“Yes! I heard your parents came to the Governor’s Ball, but I never got the chance to meet them, you should invite them sometime, I’m sure they—”

“Mokuba,” Seto growled again through gritted teeth. “Drop it.”

This was good you told yourself. Mokuba was drawn to rumours like a moth to a flame, nothing escaped him. If he was unaware of what had happened at the ball, it meant that no one had spoken about the incident, which was a positive thing.

On the other hand, being reminded of the incident only stood to emotionally exhaust you further. Dealing with the whole Kaiba family dynamic within the walls of the manor along with outside in society was taxing as it was. To be reminded of your own dysfunctional excuse of a family was too overwhelming for one day.

“Ooh, did I hit a nerve, sorry, do you not like your parents? You should be fortunate that they’re still ali—”

You only realized at hearing the clink of metal against the porcelain that you had dropped your knife and fork. Your left hand fell beside your plate on the table. Seto’s hand wrapped over your left almost immediately. This again didn’t go unnoticed by Mokuba.

“I’m really sorry,” he extended sincerely with a look of worry on his face as you stood up from the table unsteadily, feeling the blood rush to your head at the sensation of your feet supporting themselves on the steep incline of your nude stilettos.

Your vision blacked momentarily as you pulled yourself away from the table. You heard another
You hadn’t realized that the colour had drained entirely from your face as you turned. For the first couple of steps you took you felt completely fine, before a familiar feeling of your surroundings falling around you overwhelmed your senses.

You fluttered your eyes open moments later to Seto looking over you while he held you in his arms, as he knelt beside you on the floor. He looked cross, eyebrows knitted together as he studied your pale complexion.

“This is why I tell you to eat,” he snapped the moment he knew he had your attention.

You didn’t have the capacity to respond, merely managing to slowly blink your eyes, trying to clear your vision.

You hadn’t failed to eat out of personal choice; rather, when an entire team of production staff and other celebrities are working extremely hard, funneling their best efforts towards filming a show, you weren’t in a position to selfishly excuse yourself for a break at the expense of their time and energy. That’s not how the industry worked, which was inherently the problem. There was an institutionalized acceptance of disregarding ones health for the sake of output and performance. It was so severe in fact that it wasn’t merely accepted; it was encouraged and in many instances looked down upon to act in the best interests of your health at the expense of efficiency. You had been involved in this toxic industry for such an extended amount of time that you’d come to find it as the norm, in some instances unconsciously perpetuating these dangerous practice towards your juniors.

After years of neglecting your health at such a young age, the consequences were beginning to rear their ugly head.

“Mokuba,” Seto called out from his position on the floor to his brother across the table, whose footsteps you could hear approaching. “I need you to attend the meeting with the Wei group next Monday in my place.”

“In Beijing? No Seto that’s way too important for me to go on your behalf, you should really attend.”

“That’s an order Mokuba, you’re going. It shouldn’t matter to that old man and his son which Kaiba attends.”

Mokuba reluctantly agreed after a few more exchanged words, and you understood where this abrupt change of plans was stemming from.

It only stood to distress you more, knowing that not only were you failing to fulfill your role as his wife, now you were becoming a burden on his professional life.

…

“You can’t protect me forever at the expense of your company,” you scolded him in a soft voice after the two of you were alone in your room later that night.

“Then pull yourself together,” he retorted rougher than he needed to. “I can’t leave you when
you’re falling all over the place like this; especially until I’ve hunted down the swine that are after
you.” He towered over you between your legs as he stood next to you sitting on the bed.

“Seto, we don’t know when that will be, you need to – ”

“Are you questioning the extent of my influence?” he interrupted you harshly. You hadn’t meant
that as an insult to his competencies. Though the way he had lashed out at the suggestion did
frighten you slightly.

You stared up at him with wide eyed, not wanting to say anything else that could further aggravate
him.

He studied you momentarily.

“I’m only trying to protect you,” he finally sighed, closing his eyes, running his hand through his
hair.

“I’m going to bed,” you abruptly declared before burying yourself under your sheets. Emotionally,
the day had wrung you dry and your poor physical condition was only contributing to your ill
temper.

“I didn’t mean it like that. If it was that important, I would have taken you to Beijing with me,” you
heard him offer as you felt the edge of the bed dip next to you. You could distinctly hear the
irritated edge plaguing his tone. He was doing this out of obligation, not genuine concern, you told
yourself.

“Don’t force yourself, I’m alright, go to sleep, and go on your business trips. We should focus on
the things that got us this far before we concern ourselves with secondary things,” that was the
conversation from that morning combined with your upbringing talking.

“You feel our marriage is secondary in your life?”

It sounded crueller coming out his mouth. You hadn’t meant it with any contempt.

You chose not to reply, worrying that your next words would accidentally make the situation
worse. Your half-sincere attempts at damage control had afforded you this complication.

“Your words are harsh!” he barked. You wouldn’t look at him. “You demand everything of me
and yet you perceive me as being secondary?”

“I haven’t demanded anything!” your pride was your worst enemy.

“You demand my affections, my undivided attention, my sincerity, my time, my future and – ”

“I didn’t realize loving me was so straining! When I was forced into this I didn’t expect any of it,
so please, don’t hurt yourself loving me!” you screamed, hearing your own voice echo back to you
against the tall ceiling, turning away from him, which in the long run was counterintuitive
considering you were now facing his side of the bed.

“You’re fucking insufferable,” he whispered bitterly before he disappeared from your side.

You felt the lights dimming and your heart stopped for a moment when you opened your eyes to
blue eyes piercing through you.

You held his glare for a few moments before turning on your side away from him.
You let a long while pass before you allowed a soft sob to escape your lips, no longer able to quietly bear the events of the day devastating you. You liked to think that affording yourself some release was a conscious choice, and yet as soft sobs continued to leave you against your resolve; you soon came to realize that the reigns had never been in your hands. If you couldn’t even be the master of your own emotional state, how could you possibly begin to have any control over the overall situation? This thought only stood to worsen your convulsions.

You contemplated slipping away to suffer in silence within the confines of the bathroom, but an arm snaked around your waist pulling you in against a firm chest.

“I’m here,” you heard him from behind you as he lifted your head to lean against his arm over the pillow.

For someone with a temper so violent that he was often times identified by it, you could never comprehend his ability to tolerate you when you were being this unbearable. You would never admit it to him, but you would be the first to admit to yourself that you had spit out words he didn’t deserve to hear.

“I’m here,” he continued to whisper; the rough edge in his voice creating friction against the emotions that flowed smoothly past your best efforts to retain them.

You turned around to face him, your bloodshot eyes still failing to hold your silent tears.

Tilting your face up, you softly pressed your lips against his, gently kissing him. He obliged, leaning his head down to kiss you back. His kiss wasn’t demanding; he was merely reacting to yours.

You placed a hand on the side of his face, drawing him closer, as his arms wrapped around you, one arm folding behind your head and the other bringing your hips against his. You winced against his lips at the sharpness of his pull on your still aching hips. You knew he had noticed when you momentarily opened your eyes to see his blue ones darting down before focusing back on you.

You reached for the buttons of his shirt, undoing each one before pushing the fabric past his shoulders. Once again he obliged, shedding the navy shirt to the ground as he clambered over you, hovering over you on his arms and knees. He leaned down again, rolling his lips over yours.

There was something off about his motions, something different from last night, almost as if he was being extremely precise about how he touched you. You went to slip your pink, silk nightie over your head but he stopped you by pressing his forehead against yours.

“Let’s stop this here,” he whispered roughly against your lips, “you’re not physically or emotionally capable of handling sex right now.”

He fell back against the mattress on his back, under the covers next to you.

Of course, you had known that, not only were you an emotional train wreck, you still hardly had any proper control over your lower body, having sex again would only traumatize your body even further.

He folded his arm over his forehead. Lying in the dimly lit room glowing gold against the silver of the moonlight pouring in, you could see his eyes were still creased with an expression of seriousness.

“You’re not second best,” you slowly spoke, “you’re all I have… I just don’t know where I fit in your life.” His head slowly turned to hold your gaze as the words sunk in.
The truth was you were happy that he had forced his way into your life, because you felt he centered you and held you together during difficult times in ways you’ve never expected anyone else to before him. You were slowly beginning to teach yourself to appreciate this, regardless of how small, or where your puzzle piece fit in his complicated life.

You restrained yourself from asking him about the banquet. If he didn’t feel like it was your place, you wouldn’t force it. If he was so strained by his relationship with you as it was, you wouldn’t demand any more.

He carefully turned you to face him, pressing you against his chest with one hand, forcefully hiding the expression that washed over his face away from you.

...

If only you knew that you were like a breath of fresh air or an all-consuming hurricane in his life, constantly swinging from one end of the pendulum to the other. He enjoyed your presence during either, because you forced him to feel something after a lifetime of people failing to make him feel anything but hatred.
Seto Kaiba was a man of a few words. A man of even fewer words when they were expected of him, though you weren’t entirely sure if that was intentional.

He never afforded you any clarity regarding the anxiety you had presented to him, leaving your confession unanswered and to a great degree unacknowledged.

You weren’t sure if the confession was burdensome to him or if it was beyond his emotional capacity to respond to it or what you dreaded the most; that he himself was unaware of where you fit in his life in the grand scheme of things.

“Are you in pain?” You heard from behind you, his arm over you tightening as he moved himself closer to you under the sheets.

“No.” You supposed asking him what kind of pain he was referring to would have been the appropriate response, because emotionally, this was torture, but you also didn’t think emotional distress was something Seto Kaiba cared to consider as something of substance. That being said, he did hold you when you cried, so saying that he was entirely indifferent would be a disservice to what little amount of compassion he did have.

“Then what are you doing up at four in the morning?”

You didn’t realize he only woke up at will, precisely when he wished to.

“I assure you, it wasn’t intentional.” You hoped your undertone of sarcasm was well disguised as you rolled your eyes.

“What are you hiding from me?”

Apparently it wasn’t disguised enough.

“If anything Seto, I’ve laid my whole hand out on the table.”
“What are you suggesting?” he demanded to know in a dangerous tone.

“I wasn’t aware my tone implied – ”

He pulled you on to your back as he leaned over you supporting himself on his right elbow.

His brown hair defiantly spilling over his blue eyes as they glared down at you.

“What is it that you think I did this time?”

You were stunned. What did you think he did?

“Do you love me?” Perhaps you had panicked at the sudden interrogation; perhaps it was sincerity seeping out. You weren’t sure why out of all that you were curious about, that particular one had slipped out.

It was because you were a child with no concept for pragmatism, you told yourself. Whether he loved you should really have been secondary to how society perceived you in your role as his wife, or how they will perceive you. Your real concern should have been conforming to the standards of propriety and assuming the responsibilities expected of you. Though the emotion was only fleetingly visible on his face, you perceived surprise appear across his features.

He sighed as he hung his head, the tips of his hair brushing your collarbone.

“Yes. Was I not clear? That’s what’s keeping you up?” He didn’t bother masking his irritation.

“Do you think I’m a child?”

“Would I sleep with you if I thought you were a child?” he retorted almost monotonously, as if answering a worn protocol, still not lifting his head to look at you.

“What am I to you?” You wanted to know.

“My wife,” he snapped, bringing himself to hold your gaze, “what are we playing twenty questions at four in the morning?”

You fell silent at that comment. Had you expected something ridiculous like the love of his life? You had gotten carried away.

He looked over you for a moment, concern growing evident on his face. He lifted his left arm, wiping the back of his hand across your forehead before inspecting it. He brought his hand back against your forehead again.

“You’re burning up,” he declared.

“Thanks babe,” you chortled sarcastically with your eyes closed. You must have been delirious.

“No, I think you have a fever,” he corrected stoically, seemingly unfazed by what you had called him. “That explains the odd behaviour,” he muttered to himself under his breath as he pulled the covers off of him. He disappeared for a little while before you felt a cold towel being placed over your forehead. “I asked you if you were in pain earlier because you felt warm.”

You hadn’t even associated your discomfort with physical illness. All that exhaustion running around in the sun must have seeped into your brain.
You mumbled incoherently before nestling your head into your husband’s chest and falling asleep. You weren’t clearheaded enough to realize that the wet cloth against your forehead was pressing uncomfortably against his bare chest. He didn’t protest however as he slipped an arm under your head, holding you close.

You woke up to an empty bed the next morning, but the still cold cloth on your forehead informed you that it hadn’t been very long since your husband had left. Checking the time on your phone as you sat up, and seeing that it was half past seven, you jolted out of bed, taking the sheets with you, ending up on the stone floor in a hopeless mess of sheets. Wincing at the impact, you lay there motionless for a moment. You needed to be ready within the next twelve and a half minutes you told yourself. That was if you wanted to get to your campaign shoot by eight thirty. Saturday morning traffic was no better than weekdays sometimes.

Cursing yourself for forgetting to set the alarm last night, you pulled on a short, deep ‘v’ necked, fitted navy dress which flared at the waist under a white blazer. Matching the dress with tussled, chunky heeled sandals, you blindly reached for the nearest handbag – which thankfully happened to be a white Hermes. You ran down the stairs as you fumbled with the black choker behind your neck, the gold and navy tussles of your heels clinking against your straps with each frantic step you took.

You weren’t sure when Mokuba was leaving, so wanting to see him off on a positive note; you made your way towards the casual dining area of the kitchen where you were told he was having breakfast with Seto.

“I see why he married you,” Mokuba blurted out as you appeared in the doorway, causing Seto to just about choke on his coffee. He composed himself almost instantly and promptly proceeded to glare daggers at his brother.

You didn’t find it offensive, instead his unabashed honesty made you laugh.

“Good Morning Mokuba. I thought you left for work,” you addressed your husband with the latter part of your sentence, “Do up the zipper for me?” you asked, lifting away your blazer which – covering the half undone zipper behind your back – was the only reason you had worn it in twenty degree weather.

Seto stepped off the barstool, though really his feet were touching the ground to begin with, and reached for the zipper which revealed your bare back to him.

You heard Mokuba whistling as you held your hair out of the way.

“Watch it kid,” Seto snapped back sourly as you handed him the choker you had failed to clasp.

“I’m not even the kid in this room,” he protested.

Seto struggled with the clasp for a couple of moments while you centered the gold pendant. When he pulled away from you, Mokuba was grinning from ear to ear.

“I had my doubts Seto, but I have to admit; maybe staring at her for over three years wasn’t all a waste of –”
“Shut it.” Seto barked.

“Or was it longer?”

“Mokuba,” he growled dangerously in exasperation.

Somehow, out of everything else, this revelation afforded you the most relief in your current anxious state of mind, even though whether it was true or not remained to be seen.

“See me for a moment,” Seto roughly ordered, pulling you by your upper arm out of the kitchen.

“I’m late for a schedule,” you protested but you were convinced he only listened to you selectively.

He pulled you into the long passageway outside of the kitchen area, early morning sunlight pouring in to the dark hallway through the large windows from behind you.

“Why aren’t you asking me about the banquet? I know that’s what’s bothering you.”

You were gobsmacked. If he knew, why hadn’t he addressed it up until now?

“It wasn’t my place,” you explained quietly, avoiding eye contact.

“What’s not your place?” He snarled, the edge in his voice pushing you a little too far.

“This – this whole thing!” you declared motioning all around you at the walls of the manor. “I don’t know what I’m supposed to do, how I’m supposed to act, what I’m supposed to ask you and what’s off-limits. I feel like I need your permission to touch you! I’m walking on egg shells Seto! I was looking out for you last night and you lashed out at me. Your board members think I’m a child and I’m starting to think they’re right. I don’t know the first thing about being your wife. I’m competent enough to run an empire but I’m – I can’t seem to get my head together for long enough to figure out what’s expected of me! I’m starting to feel like you didn’t pick the right woman for this.” You vented, feeling completely defeated.

“What did those snakes tell you?” he seethed in a low voice, narrowing his in exasperation as he gripped your arm.

“Nothing if not a dose of reality”

“You should have come to me. You should have asked me!” he challenged.

“I don’t know what’s restricted grounds to me in your life. I don’t know how far I’m allowed in.” He exhaled deeply, composing himself.

“There are no limits… in my life, for you.”

“Say that again when you’re ready to have an open conversation with me about your past. I know nothing about you. It’s hard for me to confide in someone I don’t know anything about. Sleeping with you didn’t change that,” you continued, looking at your feet, your brows knitted together.

“You know plenty about me.” He countered.

“I know you grew up in an orphanage!” you lashed out, “and that you have a younger brother. As your wife, that’s a pathetic amount of information considering anyone off the streets could say that much about you. You tell me I haven’t taken ownership of my role as your wife? I think the reality is that you wouldn’t empower me enough to be able to.” You took a deep breath. “You can give me your soul Seto but if I don’t know what language it’s written in, it’s utterly useless,”
“Do you not feel welcome here?” he questioned as he stepped closer to you, lifting your head towards him by placing a hand on your cheek.

“No, not in your life.”

“I see. Come to the banquet with me. I had my reasons for not asking you, but if you want to be so involved with every aspect of my life, I’ll take you with me.”

“Don’t force yourself to include me. I know when I’ve overstayed my welcome.”

He growled your name under his breath in frustration.

“What were your reasons?” You wanted to know.

“I didn’t want you spending time with people who would only poison your mind about our relationship.”

That was a dose of brutal honesty you weren’t used to from him.

“What are they saying about us?” you couldn’t help but ask in a strained whisper.

“I think you know.”

“That I’m incompetent?”

“That I married someone significantly younger than me out of material greed, even though they were all for merging with Kodama gaming during it.”

There were two sides to every coin, you realized.

“I didn’t know they said that about you,” you admitted.

“I’m confident enough in my relationship with you to not let it bother me. Their cheap insults don’t concern me and it shouldn’t concern you either,” he declared confidently, forcing you to reflect on why you had so many insecurities in this relationship when he was getting through it fine. Though then again, you reminded yourself he knew more about you than you about him. You were a transparent glass while he was a looking glass. “They can’t touch us,” he affirmed as he leaned down.

You could feel his breath against your skin. You wished that this had provided you more confidence than it did.

“Thank you,” you sincerely extended.

“For?”

“Sharing something about yourself with me.”

He watched you for a moment, eyes temporarily housing confusion.

“I’ll drive you,” he offered as he leaned over and placed his lips against yours.

“Would you two get a room!” you heard Mokuba’s voice come around the corner. “My eyes,” he wailed dramatically as he disappeared back to the kitchen.

Never a dull moment, you laughed.
You purposely stayed late in the office that evening to gather your thoughts even though you had nothing particular to do, returning to the mansion around six in the evening. You would have stayed later but as the building started to become dark and vacated earlier due to it being the weekend, and you had lost your nerve. You also suspected your fever was getting worse.

From the doorway of the dining room you saw Mokuba, sitting with his legs crossed over one of the dining chairs, elbows propped on the table, intently focusing on some game on a console.

You smiled to yourself as you made a sharp turn into the room, distracted by the message from Miyuki that appeared on your phone screen at that moment.

A loud crash echoed through the large dining room. You felt yourself making impact against something, though only processing it after finding yourself on the floor and feeling the sharp stinging sensation tearing across your left palm.

The way your brain was hard wired, your first instinct was to continue reading the message on your phone as you pulled yourself up to your feet, worsening the shooting pain as you supported yourself on your left hand.

“I have a duplicate key for locker 244, Silver Lake golf club,” it read.

“I asked you if you were alright?” Mokuba’s voice came tearing through your thoughts, lightly shaking your shoulders.

“Yeah, I’m fine,” you said looking away from your screen to gage the situation. You saw a splash of fragmented porcelain spread across the polished floor, with a frightened maid frantically trying to clean it up while profusely apologizing to you. She looked to be about your age.

“You’re just like Seto –” Mokuba began to berate you.

“I’m so sorry!” you dove after the maid cutting off Mokuba, seeing the broken China wedged into her skin. “This is my fault. I’m so sorry! Get up, put some gloves on, let me help you,” you offered, reaching for her hands.

You were harshly pulled away from the floor before your hands reached hers and forced to stand on your feet. You whipped your head around, ready to scold Mokuba, only to be faced with blue eyes fiercely narrowed at you.

“She’s hurt, she needs help!” you protested after recovering from momentarily being startled by his glare, “and your China – I’m really sorry about ruining your China, money can’t replace what I just broke, at least let me clean it up.”

“Money can’t replace you either!” he bellowed. “She can be,” he angrily pointed at the maid. “I also don’t care about some broken pieces of glass. It came with the house. You’re bleeding,” he noted through gritted teeth.

Both of you entirely oblivious to the ‘o,’ shape Mokuba’s mouth had contorted into in response to Seto’s comment about you being irreplaceable.
You lifted your left hand to examine the cut. “It’s just a scratch,” you dismissed as your phone rang.

“Just a scratch? Your blood’s dripping on the floor!” Mokuba contested.

“No, her blood is dripping on the floor,” you corrected, irritated at both the brothers as Seto sharply pulled in your hand to inspect it.

“Someone please, get her some gloves and some gauze and another maid to take care of the mess!” you shouted before answering your phone.

“It’s me,” you heard Miyuki’s voice come through the other end.

“I got your message, where’s the item?”

“I left it where you asked me to.”

“399?” you clarified, referring to the number of the subway locker you had asked to leave any further evidence she found, so as to not raise suspicions.

She replied yes. You noticed another maid rushing in and relieving the injured maid of her duties.

“Did you keep a copy of it?”

“I did.”

“Did you see what was inside?” you inquired, meaning the locker the key opened.

“I did. It connects Kodama with our company. I left photos in 399.”

Your hand was still bleeding; you registered as Seto’s irritation grew with each second.

“I hope you mean the former, not my current one.”

“Yes, former Kodama members with our current board.”

“Bars?” you questioned, wanting to know if the bribes exchanged were gold bars.

“Tissue paper,” she answered, meaning that cash was being exchanged disguised as tissue boxes.

“Understood. I’ll be right there,” you informed her, distractedly tearing your arm away from Seto. He had held it with a light grip since you were injured. “The password’s the same?”

“Yes,” she confirmed before you hung up.

“And where is it that you’re going?” your husband’s infuriated voice came from behind you as you made your way out of the room, intending to fetch the key.

“Something came up.”

“Do it after you get this taken care of,” he ordered gruffly as he pulled you upstairs towards your bedroom.

…
You never did end up being able to retrieve the key that night, surrendering to Mokuba’s protests about how he would be leaving tomorrow night to return back to Tokyo and so tonight would be the last proper family dinner. He had explained that he was incredibly apologetic about what he had said last night in ignorance and wanted to make it up with better company and conversation. You thought extending one’s own improved company as an apology was an amusing alternative to the usual card or flowers.

“So are you coming to the director’s banquet next weekend?”

You’d realized by now that sharing his brother’s talent, he was immensely gifted in precisely addressing sensitive subjects.

“I will be.”

“That’s great news! Parting is such sweet sorrow, but it won’t be since I’ll see you there again next week!”

“Must you always insist on being this dramatic?” Seto inquired unimpressed.

“Oh please, not everyone can be constantly irritated about life like you Seto,” he shot back.

You shouldn’t have laughed as loudly as you did.

“See! She thinks I’m funny.”

“She likes all sorts of ridiculous things.”

“She likes you.”

Cue more uncontrollable laughter on your part. You imagined your laughter echoed down the nearby hallways.

Dinner continued with more of Mokuba’s savage one liners and Seto’s scowl growing increasingly deeper, though you knew he enjoyed his brother’s company.

Mokuba left the following evening. You weren’t home to see him off but he did perform an exceedingly long farewell speech that morning at breakfast. You were going to miss his antics. During the two nights he had visited, you felt he brightened up the dismal atmosphere of the mansion. You imagined children would likely have the same effect on the dreary attitude of the place, not that you were prepared for that. You weren’t even sure if you were particularly fond of kids. It was just that Mokuba was like a child who only grew up in appearance.

…”

The next week passed by uneventfully with work continuing to be incredibly draining, but you were accustomed to the demands of it. One thing or the other throughout the week kept you from finding time to retrieve the key Miyuki had placed in the locker.
It was Thursday, the night before the banquet, and for the first time that week, you and your husband had found time to be in bed at the same time. It was actually first time that week that the two of you even had time for a proper conversation, given that one of you would always wake up and leave the house before the other, only to come back to an empty house past midnight and fall asleep before the other got home.

Not to say that you had fallen out of intimacy over the past week, but the strains of work had almost made it as if you had forgotten how to react to each other.

You had walked out of the bathroom to find Seto lying on your side of the bed. Walking around the bed, you slipped in beside him where he usually slept.

You lay there awkwardly by his side in silence. He didn’t acknowledge you. You waited a few more moments before turning on your side away from him and preparing to sleep.

“Are you certain you want to go?” he asked as you were in mid-motion.

At first you weren’t sure what he was referring to.

“The banquet?”

“You’re too good to be around those snakes.”

“I’m sure,” you responded with an air of conviction facing away from him.

“Very well.”

You felt him slip an arm under you as he scooped you into him, pulling you on to your side against his chest.

“I can’t run from it,” you rationalized to him. “I won’t acknowledge their words but it needs to be addressed. There’s no better way to disprove their claims than to live against them.”

“They only hear what they want to. You’ll always be a child in their eyes. Don’t waste your time. If they had wanted to form an accurate opinion of you, you’ve displayed enough merit to do it. It’s a choice they’ve made not to against their better judgement.”

Regardless of the content of what he had said, it was incredibly encouraging to hear coming from his mouth. Compliments were not something Seto Kaiba ever gave.

“I’m still coming. If all the wives of the board of directors are going to be present, I think I have the right to be there as the wife of the CEO,” you declared. Of course, they wouldn’t know you’re his wife because of the disclosure agreement the directors signed but still.

There was no better way to learn something than to run in to the thick of it head first and this would be no different.

“That’s my girl,” he declared, a tone of pride tinged his words as he pressed his lips against the top of your head, bringing his right arm to hold you with both arms.

The two of you remained silent for a few moments, his scent intoxicating you. You absentmindedly drew circles on his chest over his grey shirt with your finger.

“I want to do it again,” you told him shyly, eyes focusing in to the distance.

“Do what again?” he inquired roughly. You fell silent, your fingers circling his chest falling to grip
his shirt. You could feel his eyes moving over you for a few moments. “Are you asking for sex?” he asked plainly.

“Must you say it so crudely?”

“Are you?”

“Yes,” you whispered softly, unwilling to be so direct about it.

“Are you feeling up to it?”

“I’ll do better this time.”

“That’s not what I’m asking,” he growled. “Is your health better?”

“My health only seems to be worsening. I’m feeling better now than I probably will again so.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” he demanded to know.

“My mother passed away in her early thirties and so did my maternal grandmother, I –” You couldn’t bring yourself to say it.

He let those words sink in for a moment.

“Your grandmother passed away from a car accident, she was in perfect health. Your mother from complications involved with depression. You won’t go through either of those things. You’re not going to die on me from having acid reflux,” he snapped.

He knew more about your family history than you did, and though you really shouldn’t have been surprised, you were. He did know as much as he claimed.

“I didn’t know,” you admitted quietly. You heard him grunt in understanding.

“If you want it so much, start eating better and I’ll let you have it every night,” he smirked suggestively. Though really, there was nothing suggestive about his statement, he had communicated his intentions quite plainly.

You were in so much shock hearing something like that coming from his mouth that you couldn’t even process a response.

“You really are innocent,” he teased, chuckling lowly.

You had expected that to be his way of deflecting your request but instead he gripped you by your forearm that was folded over his chest and forced you on your back, clambering over you on all fours.

Your chest began rising and falling in anticipation. He pulled his shirt over his head as he leaned over you. He crushed his lips onto yours.

He trailed his lips down the side of your face, over your ear and down the side of your neck, fingertips tantalizingly ghosting over your skin before cupping your breast. You were expecting to feel arousal as his hand massaged you, but you felt a sore pain pulsating through your chest from where he touched you. Your eyes closing tightly, a strangled cry escaped your lips.

He immediately pulled away, blue eyes intently studying your face, creased in pain.
“Did I hurt you?” he inquired, panting faintly.

“A little,” you winced, though you weren’t sure why. He’s touched you much more aggressively before.

He looked over you for a few more seconds before slowly lifting your shirt.

“They’re swollen,” he noted.

“What?” You lifted yourself up to inspect them yourself. “Oh my god,” you whispered.

“You didn’t notice?”

“No.”

“We need to see a doctor if it doesn’t get better,” he declared as he got off you and slowly lay down beside you. You were a little disappointed but if you couldn’t even handle that much physical contact, you didn’t know how your body would stand something more straining.

…

You woke up in the middle of the night disturbed by pain in your lower abdomen. You pulled yourself from the crook of Seto’s underarm where you found yourself suffocating, effectively waking him up as you sat up.

“What is it?” he inquired slightly disoriented from having just woken up.

“Don’t worry about it,” you dismissed as you slipped away from him, heading to the bathroom.

You were displeased to find that your period had decided to grace you with its presence, which as annoying as it was, was also a week early, which you thought strange since your cycle was like clockwork, never off by a day.

After sulking about it for a few more minutes, you opened the bathroom door to find your husband standing there. You made to walk past him when he circled his hand around your upper arm.

“What is it?” he inquired gruffly.

“Nothing for you to worry about,” you offered a smile. That wasn’t enough information for him. He narrowed his eyes at you.

“I need to know.”

“It’s personal,” you shot back.

“We’re married, I have an obligation know,” he repeated, more sternly than before.

You didn’t know when your life had come to a point where you were obligated to report your period to Seto Kaiba.

“I got my period,” you informed him, deadpanning.
“What?”

“I’m bleeding, it happens every month, it’s my body’s way of telling me you’re not getting a child,” you replied irritated.

“I know what it means,” he snapped, walking back to the bed. “That explains the soreness,” you heard him mutter as he walked away.

You weren’t sure if he was referring to the incident earlier that night or your attitude.
Chapter Notes

I realize the more I write these things that I’m exceptionally bad at writing events such as balls and galas. I find it difficult to carry the plot with any usefulness through them but they always get ridiculously detailed. The banquet only serves as an account of the events as it will contribute later and a vague character/development study rather than an actual plot development. That being said, get ready for the curve ball where this relationship could possibly go to hell.

Enjoy!

For a man so very concerned about keeping up appearances – all the while not caring about what other had to say at all of course – your husband decided wake you up with a surprise of the cruelest kind.

“The directors’ wives will all be wearing kimonos for the banquet,” he informed you as you rolled over and into his chest the next morning, draping an arm over you.

“What?”

“It’s a formal occasion; they’re older women, so they usually wear kimonos.”

That didn’t answer your question, though perhaps you had been too vague in wording it.

“And you thought fourteen hours before the event was a good time to tell me this? Does no one wear dresses to these things?” You were frantic. How easy did he think it was to find a formal kimono?

“I would imagine some of the daughters and granddaughters of the board will be wearing dresses.”

“How old are these daughters and granddaughters?”

“About your age, some slightly older,” he continued discussing the issue indifferently.

“You board of directors have children and grandchildren my age?” You weren’t sure why that shocked then bothered you as much as it did. “Well that explains why they think the CEO’s wife is a child,” you said. “Are you wearing something traditional?”

“Of course not.”

“So should I be?”

“If it can be helped.”

“Thanks my love, for that bomb first thing in the morning,” you grumbled in annoyance as you pulled yourself away from him and out of the bed, off on a hunt to find a suitable kimono to end all kimonos. You refused to be outdone.
Your schedule was cramped as it was after being rearranged to fit in the banquet, and now he wanted you to find a formal kimono, fourteen bloody hours before the event, the nerve, the audacity.

Your stylists’ department was going to have a heart attack courtesy of Seto Kaiba.

...

You went through the motions as you always would during your period, only to realize that it had completely stopped by evening. Slightly unnerved by this fact, considering they were usually long, bloody and brutal, you had to force yourself to get ready for the banquet instead of sitting there overthinking the possibilities. Something was definitely up but you didn’t have the leisure to concern yourself right in that moment.

One of the heads of your stylist’s team had been resourceful enough to find a local artisan that had a kimono that would fit the occasion for you.

It was a silk, hand painted ofurisode style kimono which was white before fading into gold at the bottom. The design on the kimono depicted morning over a range of traditional Japanese inspired mountains painted in silver, with light blue wisteria blossoms of different shades blowing in the wind with small gold and silver sparrows in the foreground, flying over gold hued trees in the distance.

When she first brought it to you, it had taken your breath away.

Ofurisode style kimonos were worn by unmarried women, so it did feel like you were cheating in a way, but given your arrangement, it couldn’t be helped.

Your hair was styled into a bun, the front of it parted down the middle, with a single traditional Japanese hair pin driven through the side of the bun. The pin was gold with light blue crystal wisteria blossoms cascading from one end down to just above your shoulder. Your make was youthful and glowing, cheeks lightly dusted pink. You understood that you needed to appear mature, but excessively caking on makeup wasn’t how you would push your agenda.

Seto came into the bedroom as you pulled the sandals out of the box.

“How do I look?” you asked nervously, expecting the worst. He took a few moments to look over you. Standing there as his eyes scrutinized your every detail was, even for someone that has stood in front of thousands of cameras and people at a time, immensely unnerving. Would you change if he didn’t like something on you? Probably not. Did his opinion still matter? Definitely. It was an odd train of thought.

Wordlessly he walked up to you, towering over you as you stood before him barefoot. He placed his fingers under your chin, tilting it up towards him as he leaned down, placing his lips against yours.

“Like you’re mine,” he breathed, his lips crushing against yours. You couldn’t help but smiling into the kiss, so much so that you couldn’t even return his kisses properly. “Does it make you that happy?”

You could only bring yourself to nod, unable to contain your smile.
“Don’t leave my side,” Seto advised as you entered the chandelier lit hall, his arm around yours. The grand hall was decorated in pale blues and silvers, with a circle of ice sculptures in the centre, carved to look like dragons. Round tables and silver chairs draped in white and blue silk spun out in spirals from the centre. Around the ice sculptures, a live orchestra was playing.

Looking around the room, you were glad to have worn a kimono, as every single woman in the room was dressed traditionally, even girls your age. The bright pinks, greens and oranges blossoms of their robes greatly contrasted the grey and black suits of their male counterparts as yours did with Seto’s black tailored suit.

“Seto, I understand that I may be a little sensitive to what will be said of me, but this is my element. I’ll be fine,” you assured him. Corporate gatherings you had attended since you could walk. You may have been treated a certain way at home, but out in public, as rare as the occasion might have been to be let out of your room; you were for all intents and purposes, a child of the elite. It also helped that you’ve been the president of your own conglomerate since you were seventeen.

“I’m sure. Don’t let them get to you. Remember whose wife you are.”

“Does that mean I can throw your power around?” You were joking, mostly.

“Crush them,” he spoke through gritted teeth. You pulled on his arm to make him look at you, smiling at him for having gone along with your joke, only for him to look back at you with a stony countenance. The man was serious.

A man who you recognized from outside Seto’s office the week before along with his wife greeted you two just then.

“You look ravishing. It’s so wonderful to see you again Mrs. – ” he corrected himself with your maiden name, awkwardly introducing the woman in the olive green kimono next to him as his wife, while he bowed to Seto in greeting as well.

You and Seto both stood there unresponsively at the ill thought out form of greeting.

Recovering, the man began to speak again, changing the topic of conversation drastically.

“I heard you were making remarkable progress in the field of AI – it’s only a shame it was discontinued,” he added in a reserved tone of voice. “We are looking forward to Kodama gaming coming under Kaiba Corporation’s administration.” His tone suggested that Kaiba Corp. would reverse the AI development discontinuation as if he was doing a charitable service to your corporation.

If you had received his greeting with ill feeling, this was enough to make you want to show him the door.

Seto opened his mouth to dispute his words, but you wouldn’t let him get a word in. It was you the windbag was addressing.

“I think your words are a great disservice to Kodama’s legacy, Mr. Kurotsuchi. I don’t see why a
corporation as powerful as Kodama would ever need to come under Kaiba Corp. If the companies
of my husb- Mr. Kaiba and I were to merge, it would be just that, a merger, not an acquisition, and
as such will have a joint leadership. Though hearing the minds of the Kaiba Corp.’s board of
directors is making me apprehensive of even considering a merger.” Your words were sharp,
though carefully selected to not accidentally insult Seto or tarnish the name of Kaiba Corp. as a
whole. That being said, his words would only become increasingly more difficult to deflect with a
polite selection of words.

“Not at all,” he back pedalled, not wanting to sabotage a merger of this scale in front of the CEOs,
as a couple more directors joined the conversation with their wives. “I was just merely stating that
when you are… officially married to Mr. Kaiba,” he chose his words cautiously as his wife was
around and couldn’t disclose the arrangement, “and you become a part of his estate, Kodama
would be overseen by him, and so by extension come under Kaiba Corp.”

Did this joker just?

“Yes you’re very lucky indeed to have such a capable boyfriend,” his air-headed wife chimed in.
Women oppressed themselves sometimes. You shot her a glare.

“I’m the majority shareholder of Kodama Mr. Kurotsuchi, and marriage will hardly change that. I
dare say, I do wonder if you have a comprehensive understanding of how ownership works in a
publicly traded organization. I would also not become,” you stressed the word ‘become,’ “a part
of his estate, I am not a pot of flowers. Your understanding of marriage and stocks deeply concerns
me when I consider a merger with Kaiba Corp., especially if minds like yours are the best the
corporation has to offer.” You almost wondered if you had overstepped your boundaries in how
you addressed Kaiba Corp. to the point where you had slighted Seto, but he stifled a laugh with his
fist at that comment.
The man visibly swallowed at those words and the conversation turned to game development
which while you kept up with the topic matters, you didn’t feel strongly enough to contribute your
opinions. A few more board members joined the conversation along the course of it.

Eventually the women began to excuse themselves one by one and one executive, after turning to
his wife and requesting she leave addressed you.

“Why don’t you leave the men to talk business, dear,” he dismissed you. His wife taking this cue,
reached for your forearm to pull you along but you stood your ground, and Seto’s grip around your
arm tightened.
The woman was sensible enough judge the situation well, swiftly excusing your company. The
moment she was out of earshot, Seto snapped icily.

“I don’t care how you treat your airheaded wife but you will not slight mine the same way, is that
understood?”
The man froze and before your husband’s words had properly fallen over the stunned circle of
men, you began where he had left off.

“One of these things is not like the other, Mr. Hakashima, and I’m not referring to my gender in
this company. I’m referring to the outdated, male-centric mindset you are perpetuating, effectually
portraying your intelligence. The odd thing out here is the disparity in your intelligence –at least I
hope – against your fellow members. Though then again, if this in fact is the calibre of thought that
Kaiba Corp. is operating at, it’s understandable why we surpassed you in AI technology. You see,
we happen to utilize a hundred percent of the brains of our employees as opposed to a male
dominant fifty percent. When you do your female counterparts such a disservice, you’re effectively
shooting yourselves in the foot by only allowing your company to move at fifty percent capacity. I also worry greatly of what extensive damage such a patriarchal mindset would do to the image of my own company. It’s unfortunate a child such as myself is forced to rationalize such a fundamental concept in such extensive detail to you.”

Before you could even stop to consider the weight of your words, Seto broke into a fit of laughter of the manic variety. Hearing it at such a close proximity was actually quite frightening. All of this and you’ve only been here for twenty minutes.

“I think my wife has spoken for the both of us, and as a valuable business partner of Kaiba Corp. and my successor to this corporation, I would heed her words well if I were you,” he coldly declared after calming himself down.

Apologies were mumbled, albeit begrudgingly and the topic of conversation took a different course, with the board members desperate to escape your wrath.

Your phone vibrated from inside your clutch and you excused yourself, switching to Korean as you answered the call from the deputy director of your Seoul branch.

Having dealt with the situation while standing in the corridor of the grand hall, you turned towards the door way to rejoin your husband when you were unwillingly coerced – for the lack of a better way to describe their unrelenting persistence in conversing with you – by a group of women into a conversation of a much worse variety than what you had had with the members of the board.

Some of the women looked to be about your age and some looked to be their mothers and possibly grandmothers.

“So, you’re Kaiba’s girlfriend, not his fiancé or anything?” a young woman in an obnoxiously loud pink kimono questioned you.

“Aiko, we do not refer to Mr. Kaiba that way, and she’ll very likely be the young lady to bear the next heir to the Kaiba Corporation,” her mother berated her in an overtly posh tone which grated your nerves.

“Right, but you’re not engaged or anything? No promise rings, no engagement rings –”

“Aiko!” her mother interrupted again.

“That’s quite alright,” you spoke plainly, but you knew the older lady caught the tone of your voice which contradicted your words. “No,” you lied smiling – image was important, you reminded yourself. “Nothing of the sort.”

You knew her question was attempting to calculate if Seto was on the market. You didn’t mind the curiosity; you knew half the young, unmarried women at the banquet had only even attended with this question in mind, if not all of them. You began to wonder if even the prospect of you being married would even discourage them in their pursuits.

“How did you two meet?” another woman about your age interrupted eagerly.

How did you two meet?

“Through business, it wasn’t very romantic, there’s not much to say really.” You didn’t want to weave a long winded tale that Seto couldn’t match. You made a note to yourself to go home and come up with something believable with your husband.

This was followed by a string of equally unnecessary, increasingly more invasive questions about
your relationship.

Then started the autograph train, the photograph frenzy and the “I’m such huge fan of yours,” spiel which while you usually found tiring, in this toxic war zone you found refreshing for a change.

You excused yourself as you left their conversation, thoroughly exhausted, having experienced a sensation akin to going through the spin cycle of the washer on high speed.

Finding your way towards the powder room to compose yourself, you questioned why you were this tired.

Of course as you discreetly wove through the crowds so as to not get ambushed again, you heard your fair share of gossip about yourself, spun from the usual rumour mill which fell to the effect of how you were a child, naïve, too innocent –in a negative sense – to be involved with the likes of Kaiba Corp.’s intensity, etc. You had found out many things that you hadn’t previously known about yourself. All of what you heard was equally upsetting but you tightened your resolve to not allow them to affect you personally, or at least you tried. You understood why Seto hadn’t wanted you to come. None of it was true, but that didn’t stop it from being harrowing.

“I can’t stand her, she’s so perfectly poised all the time, like some creepy doll,” you heard as you opened the door to the powder room. The woman hadn’t mentioned any names, but you had a sinking suspicion of who the subject of conversation was.

“What does Mr. Kaiba see in that child?”

“If you were born into as much power and wealth as her, I imagine it would be a great deal easier to get the attention of the most powerful man in the country,” another woman replied.

“When a man is as powerful as Seto Kaiba, they cross over into the realm of being a god; I don’t understand how she keeps him, even with all that money.”

“I bet she’s good in bed.”

“I hear she’s frigid,” a fourth woman whispered.

“Of course she is she’s a child.” If you had a dime for every time you had heard that one tonight…

“With a title like the Nation’s Fairy, can you afford not to be?”

“I heard she doesn’t even let Mr. Kaiba touch her. What is the point of all that beauty, it’s wasted on her.”

“Who wouldn’t let a man like that in your bed? I bet he gets his action somewhere else,” one woman snickered.

You had come prepared to hear such things, you reminded yourself. Despite how distressing they were, you told yourself to accept them humorously, but the rumours were getting increasingly more ridiculous for you to merely force yourself to be amused by them.

“She looks like a prude – ”

“Don’t you ever get tired of such ridiculous rumours?” you asked dramatically as you stepped out from behind the entry wall of the powder room, interrupting the group of seven women gossiping around the red velvet chaises. An eerie silence fell over the room at your presence. You stepped forward towards the mirrors, retrieving your powder compact from your clutch as you lightly
pressed the cushion against your face, thriving on the air of unsettledness that was suffocating the room. “I remember faces well,” you warned while smiling. “Your husband, such a polite gentleman, do you think he’s about ready to retire?” you continued charmingly having absolutely no idea who her husband was. “And your father, what was he the director of?” You snapped when the young woman refused to reply. “I asked you a question.”

“Hu-human resources,” she quivered.

“HR. Tell me, is he competent in his position?” you inquired, a pleasant tone coating your words which implied a different motive.

“You’re Mr. Kaiba’s girlfriend; you don’t own the company,” she tried challenging you shakily.

“Would you like to wager that on your father’s position my dear?” you asked, turning to her.

At this point, you didn’t care for if they realized your saintly image was a visage. You wanted to assert your power as a businesswoman to avoid being trifled with later. You’ve also had just about enough of being insulted while standing there pitifully accepting it all.

Hushed apologies were muttered, bows made unwillingly before the women shuffled out of the room agitatedly.

You considered whether you would regret not biting your tongue and bearing the weight of it quietly, later.

Possibly, you answered yourself, but for now, at least your head space was clear of defamations. A few accusations floating around wouldn’t make a dent in your image anyway you concluded.

You walked out into the grand hall in search of your husband, to find him surrounded by a group of men and Mokuba. You weren’t sure who you were more pleased to see; your husband or his brother. Mokuba always had a gift for lightening the mood.

“Where have you been,” Seto barked in your ear as you slipped your arm through his.

“Getting thoroughly destroyed by rumours,” you admitted.

“Were any of them true?”

“No.”

“Then does it matter?”

“It shouldn’t,” you quietly agreed, understanding that this was his way of lifting your mood.

“You did quite a number on the egos of my board members earlier,” he whispered, smirking in your ear.

“Really?” you whispered back.

“Does shell shocked mean anything to you?”

“Would you two please get a room,” Mokuba finally interrupted. “I didn’t come all the way from Tokyo for you to whisper in her ear all night Seto,” he complained, pulling you two aside from the crowd. “The more I see her, the more I approve of your choices bro.”
“Mokuba!”

It was starting again. The little, brotherly spats you loved watching.

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You were seated for dinner with Seto, Mokuba and a few board members along with their wives around the main table of the hall.

The conversation during the meal was much more pleasant in comparison to what you’ve had the misfortune of enduring earlier in the night. You thought this was perhaps as a result of how you had addressed the earlier attempts at disregarding your competence and worth. Seto wasn’t just saying that you had dealt a number on his board for the sake of lip service; then again you shouldn’t have thought for a moment that he would have said something he didn’t mean. You may have only conversed directly with two members, but word spreads fast, especially in such close circles. Whatever the reason, the tone of this conversation was notably more respectful towards you.

You started feeling nauseated during the second course of the meal. You could feel your face contort with discomfort as you experienced a familiar sensation of bile rising in your throat. You suppressed it before anyone took notice, or so you had believed.

Seto placed his hand on your thigh, as he shot you a glance which asked if you were alright. You nodded faintly assuring him that you were.

By the time dessert was served, you couldn’t tolerate the smell of the crème brûlée in the slightest. It was so overwhelming that you couldn’t suppress your urge anymore. You hastily rose from your seat, placing your napkin back on the table, hurriedly slurring your apologies as you rushed towards the bathroom.

Considering yourself fortunate enough to have at least to a certain degree made your way to the bathroom in a graceful manner, you locked yourself into the nearest cubicle.

Your episode of – what you assumed was your acid reflux flaring up again – was painful and thorough and when you finally gathered yourself enough to exit the bathroom, you had double vision. Wondering to yourself if your convulsion had been aggressive enough to deprive your brain of oxygen, you staggered on your feet as you traced your hand along the wall of the corridoor out to the great hall.

As you entered the hall, the bright lights of the vast space were casting strange shadows in your vision. You saw Seto walk up to you among the sea of people.

Not wanting to make a scene, you leaned against your husband.

“I feel faint,” you whispered to him. “I feel like I’m going to pass out,” you said holding your head against his chest.

“We’re leaving,” he responded leaning in, without missing a beat as he supported your weight.

Seto Kaiba was never one to announce his departures, so abruptly leaving an occasion wasn’t something unexpected of him.
You registered him having Mokuba collect your clutch before discreetly guiding you with an arm around your shoulders out of the banquet hall. You couldn’t recall reaching the staircase which led to the lobby.

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Opening your eyes to the dimly lit bedroom, you looked to your right to find Seto as you had found him the first night you had gotten married; sitting on a chair at your bedside, arms crossed, asleep with his laptop open on his lap.

You realized you were out of your kimono and dressed in one of his shirts over your underwear. Checking the time on your phone on the nightstand, you reached a hand out to him.

“Seto,” you called out in a small voice, “come to bed.” Seeing him so concerned that he felt the need to watch over you all night made you feel very grateful.

His eyes opened instantaneously at the brush of your fingertips.

“Come to bed,” you repeated. “It’s almost three in the morning.”

“Are you feeling better?” he asked as he set his laptop down on the nightstand, closing it, reaching out to place the back of his palm on your forehead. You pulled yourself against the headboard.

“Yes.”

He reached into the drawer and threw a flat, rectangular box on to the sheets over your legs.

“Take a test. I think you’re pregnant,” he stated abruptly as he sat back in his chair.

You’ve had your suspicions that it could have possibly been spotting – a discharge which occurs during implantation – when it lasted only a day, but it was too overwhelming to accept.

You had suspected this yourself but never with any seriousness. It was disconcerting feeling that your husband was more perceptive of the changes in your body than yourself, but more so, what he was suggesting was terrifying. The latter concern was greatly overshadowing the former in your mind.

“Take the test,” he ordered, reading the perceptible horror on your face. You couldn’t help but faintly shake your head in denial. It was all adding up, and while the obligation to take responsibility for either possibility weighed heavily on your mind, you felt too paralyzed to form a tangible thought. You had seen all the signs yourself but refused to believe it. “This is why I said you weren’t ready,” he sighed, “you’re too young for me to put you through this. Take the test,” he repeated, albeit gentler this time. “Taking this test won’t change anything. If we are expecting, that’ll remain unchanged regardless of this test, so stop being stubborn and take it,” he snapped, unable to maintain the calm composure with which he had begun the sentence.

You stared him for a moment longer before looking down at your hands, picking at your cuticles, trying to form a coherent thought. You could feel your complexion draining of colour, features hardening into a stony countenance that resembled your husband’s.

You felt your subconscious had thought over a many number of things, but your conscious mind was playing keep away with it.

“Come on,” he urged, irritation teeming his voice, as he picked up the box, and snatched one of your hands away from your clasp, forcing you out of bed. He pulled you into the bathroom, opening the box and sprawling the contents of it across the marble counter of the sink.

He picked up the instruction sheet, narrowing his eyes as he scanned the writing.

“Hand it over,” you said, reaching for the piece of paper. He obliged. You could feel your breathing become vaguely erratic as the reality of what you were doing sunk in.
You motioned for him to leave, locking the door behind him.

Having followed the instructions in the box, you stood over the sink waiting for the time to pass. You looked over your faded eyeliner, tired eyes against a discoloured complexion and roughly brushed hair stiff with hairspray. Faint traces of smudged pink lipstick and fallen specs of mascara littering your skin; your catastrophic appearance reflected well your inner turmoil.

Is this what you wanted?

You brushed your hair absentmindedly. You thought about your contracts, your projects, your commitments and obligations. You were so very young. You had an empire to run, as did your husband. You were selfish and you didn’t like the guilt that found you when you refused to be unapologetic about it.

You wouldn’t even let you mind wander towards the assassination attempts.

One pink line drew itself across the screen. You waited with baited breath. In that moment, waiting for that second line, similar to subconsciously knowing exactly what side you wanted your coin to land as it was suspended in mid-air, you knew what you wanted. The second line followed.

This wasn’t what you wanted. Was Seto what you wanted? This question terrified you infinitely more.

A voice told you that this result wasn’t conclusive, and you couldn’t describe the amount of guilt that surged through you as your mind found comfort in that possibility.

You didn’t know how Seto would react to this. You knew he wasn’t ready, so you were almost certain he would reject you and the baby. You couldn’t blame him.

Children would colour the dreary halls of this place, you remembered thinking, but you weren’t even sure if you were fond of children. You’ve never even held one.

You held on to the edge of the marble counter with the same hand clutching the reader, while sinking to your knees in despair before the sink. You distractedly turned around and leaned against the oak cupboards beneath it, not paying mind to the ivory knobs that were digging into your bone as you leaned your neck against them.

This was a lifetime of commitment; there were no scapegoats, no exit strategy. You didn’t like the suffocation.

Drowning in thought, unable to move a muscle besides your eyes which darted across the distant wall in calculation, you could only faintly hear your name being called, fists meeting the door in an endless pattern.

You slipped into a state of despondent unresponsiveness.

Your eyes flickered to the side slightly as it perceived the approaching footsteps. You registered vaguely wondering how the door had opened. You rose to your feet and extended the reader to him almost mechanically, eyes never leaving the blank, distance spot you had found numbness in.

Your eyes eventually sauntered momentarily up to your husband’s face, blankly studying the test. “As I expected,” he declared plainly.

“It’s not conclusive,” you pointed out.
“No, I’ll take you to the hospital tomorrow morning to have you checked.”

You staggered forward a couple of steps, falling forward against him. He didn’t falter as he caught your weight, eyes still glued to the reader he held out in one hand, the other wrapping around you.

You felt him lean forward and press his lips against the top of your head hesitantly.

You could feel a rush of pins and needles sweep under your skin from where his lips had touched.

The calmness in his manner greatly contrasted your ill-composed countenance, your earlier numbed composure having deteriorated into internal chaos.

You closed your eyes at a loss for what to do.

Eventually he pulled you away from him, setting down the tester on the counter before turning you to face the sink.

“Bend down,” he ordered as he held your hair out of the way with one hand. He adjusted the brass faucets as you complied, checking the water temperature with his right hand. He cupped his palm as he brought the water to your face.

You bitterly thought about how good of a father he would be.

There were many women that weren’t fortunate enough to experience what you treated with unhappiness you reminded yourself.

You felt his thumb rub over your lipstick stained lips, before smudging away the colour over your skin at the corner of your mouth.

He reached for the tall glass container which contained your moisturizer.

“Is this what you use?”

“The next one over,” you corrected him quietly, motioning to the slightly shorter cleanser. He pumped much more product onto his palm with his thumb than he needed before lathering it over your face.

“I’ll do it myself,” you protested after regaining some of your composure, but he wouldn’t listen.

Eventually all of the white foam was washed off, even what he got in your ear.

You reached for the towel while he washed his hands.

“You look less like a nightmare,” he commented as you finished drying your face and applied your moisturizer. You would have normally found that offensive but the gravity of what you were facing was so severe that it made you release a single syllable of laughter. You wondered if that was his original intention in making that observation out loud.

Bending over, he reached a hand under your knees and behind your back, scooping you up into his chest before carrying you over to the bedroom and laying you on your side of the bed. All the while, you gazed up at his brilliant blue eyes, searching for how he felt about the situation, though as always, they perfectly concealed the sentiments they held.

“Are you happy?” you asked him apprehensively as he slipped in under the sheets next to you.

“Of course I am.” His face read concern. You couldn’t quite place it but his expression didn’t
match his words.

“I didn’t think you could afford the time.”

“There’s nothing I can’t afford,” he spoke huskily against your ear, turning you over on your side. “I’ll take responsibility of you.”

You wondered why those words sounded as if they were spoken out of obligation.

You felt his knees curving against the back of your legs, his hand gently draping over your stomach, fingers splaying out.

“I found the gun you kept in your kimono sleeve,” he spoke after a while of silence. You had almost thought he had fallen asleep at how deeply his chest rose and fell against your back.

You weren’t sure why he had chosen to address this when a more pressing matter was at hand. You almost wondered if he was refusing to acknowledge it. Though obviously what he had said wasn’t a passing comment. Seto Kaiba never chose to mention something unless it was intentionally done, with purpose.

What you didn’t know was if he was asking you for your reasons or if he was making you aware that he knew. You weren’t certain so you chose to stay silent.

“Why?”

“I think you know why,” you returned softly. To an extent, you were still in a state of disbelief, mildly disconnected from reality.

“I’ll increase the guard on you.”

“There’s been a black car following me around, since before you assigned guards…” you trailed off unsure how to word the question.

“Was it a black Lexus?”

“I think so.”

“If it started the week you left, then those are my men. I had them keep an eye on you while you were away from me. I will still need to confirm it’s the same car.”

You didn’t feel the need to respond to it.

Silence fell over the both of you with neither of you willing to address the pregnancy. You wanted to know if his earlier words were all he was prepared to spare on the subject.

Even in his embrace you felt incredibly lonely. His behaviour was only confirming your suspicions.

You withdrew yourself to finding comfort in listening to his steady breathing, his breath brushing gently against your ear. You wouldn’t acknowledge it; you didn’t think you could handle it.

Your heard your phone ringing from the walk in closet. You reluctantly pulled yourself away from your husband’s warm – at least physically warm – embrace before dragging your feet to pick up your phone from your clutch.
You greeted with your last name as you answered.

“I hate to bother you so early ma’am, but our mainframe is under attack,” the agitated voice of Kodama’s vice-president tore through your phone.

“What the hell is that supposed to mean? Do we have any idea who?” you inquired gritting your teeth as you instinctively reached for a pair of denim shorts, slipping it on under Seto’s white button up shirt which already fell like a dress past your thighs.

“No, we don’t have that much information yet.”

“I’m on my way.”

You laced up a pair of trainers as you grabbed your car keys from one of your purses. You didn’t even look to see which car the keys belonged to but considering you only had two of your cars in the garage, neither choice really concerned you.

You rushed out of the closet, mind on autopilot, hair cascading in an undone mess of waves.

“Where the hell are you going?” you heard Seto call out to you from the bed as you reached the bedroom door handle. You stopped momentarily, your mind running your thought sequences over again as you asked yourself what exactly you were doing.

“Kodama’s mainframe has been compromised,” you managed. By then Seto was already out of bed walking towards you.

Your mind defaulting back to autopilot, you didn’t wait for him to reach you or allow him the opportunity to question you again. You hurried out of the room, tearing down the stairways and corridors, occasionally bumping into walls as you made your way to the garage.

The passenger door swung open as you started up the car. Eyes darting to your left, you saw Seto stepping in. You noticed he had changed into a pair of tight black pants and a long sleeved black pullover shirt which visibly displayed his muscle definition, with either a navy or black trench draped over his arm. You could comprehend him walking faster than you but what you found remarkable even in your occupied state of mind was that he had found time to put on his elaborately buckled boots. How was he always so frustratingly composed? On a more serious note, why was he wearing that and bringing along a trench in high-twenty degree weather?

You looked over at him, waiting for him to extend an explanation as to why he was here, but he didn’t.

“Are you sure you can drive without getting us both killed?” he asked flatly. You understood you wouldn’t be getting an explanation.

You raced the car down the streets at a speed that would put your husband’s driving to shame – though probably not – arriving at your company building under fifteen minutes.

“And you have the nerve to criticize my driving,” Seto remarked as he left the car.

Sprinting on pure adrenaline into the building after scanning your fingerprint into the reader that opened into the emergency access route, you were held back by Seto wrapping his hand around your wrist, pulling you back.

“Wear a bra next time,” he growled as he draped the trench coat he had been carrying over your shoulders, cloaking you in it. Even in your distracted state, you could feel colour rising to your cheeks.
It was much longer than you had expected it to be, and heavier.

…

Entering the glass faceted atrium that was the central command centre of Kodama, you looked over at the rows upon rows of computers, each occupied, a neon blue lights emitting from each workstation against the dark space, with a large, theatre sized computer screen against the distant right wall of the hall. Descending down the few steps that stood below the door, you found the vice-president frantically barking commands to secure the system from the intruder. He looked to be slipping. The moron, you had expected better.

A visible stiffness swept across the atrium as your presence became known. Isolated whispers were heard for a moment before your voice echoed.

“How did this happen?”

“The overnight team lead contacted me saying a hacker was making easy work of our system’s firewalls when – ” your vice-president began. You saw him look past you nervously as he did, towards your husband, clearly disconcerted. You interrupted him.

“That’s impossible; our defenses are on par with Kaiba Corp,” you challenged. “So how long exactly has this attack being going on for?”

“Our systems picked up on it a little over half an hour ago. I informed you the moment I was notified.”

“What the hell were you doing for the other fifteen minutes?” you roared at the overnight leader of operations who was slowly but surely shrinking away.

Your vice-president continued to brief you on the situation. The tracker was anonymous and from what you understood, incredibly elusive. Seto briefly looked over the situation, commenting on the skill of the hacker.

You could only spare a moment of thought.

“Take the mainframe offline,” you ordered.

“With all due respect, taking the main frame offline will also take down all the online servers with it,” your vice-president countered.

“I know what it does you fool. Take it down,” you repeated.

“But Friday night, early into Saturday morning is one of the busiest hours for our servers; all the online gamers will lose their progress, it’ll be detrimental to the brand!” he continued to protest. You momentarily stopped typing in your executive access codes to authorize a system shut down of that scale, focusing your undivided attention on him. You offered him a piercing glare.

“Shouldn’t we at least warn those who are currently logged into save their progress?” he offered, visibly unnerved by your gaze.

You returned to enabling a system wide shut down, still on your feet.
“We don’t know how many entry points the hacker has secured; they could easily have someone logged in under a regular user account. A warning would only serve to notify them of our motives.” You gave it some thought. As insubordinate and defiant as your vice-president was being right now, his words weren’t entirely untrue. “We’ll release a public apology tomorrow morning,” you declared as you considered your options, speaking into the microphone on the desk.

“Why don’t –” You heard your husband begin to say something when suddenly your mind afforded you an epiphany, and you snapped your fingers, unintentionally cutting him off.

“Release a virus.”

“What!?” you heard both your husband and the vice-president chorus incredulously.

“Upload a virus onto the mainframe; one that won’t corrupt any files or data and will only serve the purpose of freezing over all operations in the system, both ours and the hacker’s. Take down the mainframe in its frozen state. Transfer all the original files of the AI project on to this computer then disconnect it entirely from the network. Destroy everything else on the subject. Track the hacker’s IP before systems go back to normal.”

“Understood. Though how do you know the AI is what they’re after?”

“I don’t. It’s the only thing that I can’t afford to compensate later. Spare no expense in securing those files.”

“Programming a virus like that will take quite a long time,” one of your programmers chimed in from the front of the room.

“Fire him,” you barked looking at your vice-president, only to realize that Seto had said the same thing to you.

You didn’t need naysayers. Uneasiness immediately intensified across the room as the words echoed through the vast space. You could see heads craning in further towards their screens, even if they had been focused to begin with.

“Move over, you’re too slow,” Seto snarled, pushing one of your employees out of their chair and settling down at his workstation. “I’ll program the virus myself.”

The possibility that Kaiba Corp. could be leading this attack also vaguely crossed your mind given the conversations you’ve had the night before with the board of directors. That was what had pushed you mainly to focus on the AI files. Looking over at your husband though, you slowly concluded against it.

‘He wouldn’t,’ you told yourself, senses tinged with guilt for having considered it. If he wanted access to those files, all he would have had to do was ask you.

“Do you need the access codes to our system?” you asked as you forced those thoughts to subside.

“Who needs access codes?” he sneered. Or maybe he didn’t even need to ask.

“Right, stupid question, obviously not you,” you returned his tone, albeit a little more playfully, before turning to address your other programmers. “Plant a decoy for all the transferred files. You have three minutes from the systems going offline to complete the purge.”

Soon, the virus was uploaded into the mainframe, ceasing all functions and operations, before the remaining sequence of actions of your chain of commands was followed. You swayed a little on
your feet as a sensation of light headedness washed over you while you locked all the data involving the AI project with access only open for yourself.

Seto shot out his hand, fingers gripping your upper arm as he stabilized you without looking away from his screen. You knew there would be a conversation about this later.

Your team tried sealing as many possible exits as time allowed before systems went back online, though the hacker’s IP disappeared as the coordinates were narrowed to the northeast region of Domino.

Your suspicions were proven correct as the tracker had tried – and failed – to reach nothing besides the planted decoys of the AI project.

When your system was secure and all the servers fully operational, you turned on your heel to leave.

“Your idea was ingenious,” Seto acknowledged as you two left the atrium.

“What?” You were slightly preoccupied in your own thoughts.

“Your idea to counter it with a virus. A virus spreads much faster than a collection of manual commands.”

“You did all the work. I couldn’t write a code to save my life.”

He chuckled but there was reservation in his tone. “It’s embarrassing that my wife of all people doesn’t know the first thing about programming.”

Your attention fell away from the conversation. As you walked through the metal accented hallway towards the elevators, your eyes focused on the glass floor, realization dawning on you. Everyone that had ever stood in line to inherit Kodama’s legacy was eliminated. You could dismiss your mother as a coincidental exception, but she wasn’t an only child. You weren’t entirely aware of what happened to her siblings. You knew she had at least one older brother for certain but you’ve never heard him being mentioned. Your grandmother’s passing was starting to feel incredibly suspicious given the circumstances now, though it was so long ago perhaps it was unrelated to matters at hand.

One thing you did know for certain now following tonight’s events was that your AI project had attracted the attention of more than just the Kaiba Corp. executives. The hacker you had encountered was incredibly skilled, even Seto had acknowledged that. You considered the possibility of the assassination attempts on you also being connected to whoever’s interest in your AI development.

A shiver ran through you.

You didn’t notice that you had fallen out of step with Seto who had now walked ahead of you.

You could feel your vision doubling as your attention left your disorderly thoughts. You saw Seto turning back to look at you before your vision fell to the ceiling, consciousness fading into darkness.

…
Your consciousness afforded incessant beeping first as it came to. Behind your eyelids, you could see bright light. Opening them to a hospital room, you saw doctors surrounding your bed, sunlight pouring in from a large window on your left. Your ears were sensitive to the tree branches tapping against the glass window in the wind. You noticed there were flowers from early spring left on the branches.

You felt severely disoriented. It was supposed to be night time.

A dome of plastic was suffocating you, wires from futuristic machines with flashing lights tying you down. Your eyes darting around, you tried to speak, as they finally landed on your husband on the right by your bed side. A mask was trapping your words.

A nurse helped you pull yourself up.

“Her condition is stable; Mr. Kaiba, but her body can’t handle the pregnancy.”

You heard the words vasovagal syncope being muttered among the other doctors.

You saw Seto reaching over to you across the bed and asking you something, a serious expression stiffening his face. Your eyes fluttered over his features, wondering why suddenly his words were elusive to you.

You vision went black again.

“Tell me you’re feeling better,” your mind played back to you in your unconscious state.

You heard the doctors being dismissed, while another who you assumed was also a doctor remained to speak.

“Pardon the blunt way I will address this. It is astounding that she was able to conceive in her current physical condition. If there were some formula to calculate the probability, it would be so miniscule that it wouldn’t even have been considered. I’ll be frank Mr. Kaiba, if by some miracle your wife is able to carry this pregnancy to term, either she or the child will die. I can guarantee you one out of those two outcomes, if not both.”

“What are the chances of her conceiving again?”

The silence that followed answered that question for you.

You felt your heart sink. You may not be ready now, but the thought of being deprived of it permanently was horrifying.

You recognized the disguised devastation which strained Seto’s voice under his sangfroid as he spoke his next words.

“Are you saying it’s impossible?” his voice gruffly cut through the silence, only to be met with more silence.
For your humour, here's an actual reference:

"There’s nothing I can’t afford." - Seto Kaiba Episode 195, Dub (14:34)
You're Preparing For The End Too

Chapter Notes

Please hold your aggression for the next chapter. Kill me after the next one.

I think next I'll just do a series of one shots in an established relationship to cleanse your souls when this dramatic one is over in a few chapters (hopefully) lol.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

If you had said something, you didn’t hear it, but you had meant to call out his name.

“I’m here,” you finally heard his voice. It was accompanied by a wall of all the background noise your ears had failed to comprehend suddenly pouring in. You could feel a headache forming, your eyes felt heavy. It looked to be late evening.

You vaguely perceived him setting down his laptop on the cupboard by your bedside.

You realized you were still wearing an oxygen mask. Your mind vividly recalled the conversation you had heard earlier, but you refused accept it as anything more than a lucid dream. You saw Seto slamming his fist against a flashing button over your bed.

You felt a blur of movement and you realized his arms were around you, his face pressed against the side of yours. You could distinctly feel his fingers tightening around the back of your head.

The door opened on the far end of the room and he pulled away from you. His expression had returned to a discontent scowl. You noticed he had his sleeves pulled up his arm, his hair slightly disheveled, fringe falling wildly over his eyes, likely as a result of him running his fingers through it too many times.

He wouldn’t look at you.

A doctor appeared by his side. He removed your oxygen mask, inquiring if you could breathe properly as you pulled yourself up. When he spoke you recognized it to be the same voice you had heard earlier.

“You experienced an episode of vasovagal syncope. It was triggered by heightened stress. Your blood pressure dropped dangerously, and oxygen flow to your brain severely depleted, so you fainted. It’s common to a certain degree in pregnant women but the condition of your body in combination with your emotional distress worsened the effects,” he explained. You nodded disoriented in response. “That being said, we think it is best to terminate this pregnancy.” Your heart stopped. What you had heard wasn’t a disjointed dream.

“Who’s we?” you managed in a strained whisper. You could feel your breathing becoming laboured.

“Me,” Seto’s reluctant voice reached you. You slowly turned your head to face him, face contorted with disbelief and betrayal.

“You don’t want it.” You had meant to make it a question but you told yourself you knew better.
“It’s not a choice of whether I want it or not,” he explained roughly. “Your body’s not ready to carry this to term. You’re young; we have a long time to try again when—”

“You’re lying,” you cried. “I heard everything. This might be our last chance. You need an heir, I need an heir, do you not want children?” you screamed at him accusingly. You briefly saw some sort of emotion flash across his blue eyes before they hardened again. He stood in his place, arms crossed over.

“Get a hold of yourself, act up to your reputation,” he snapped suddenly switching to Mandarin, presumably so the doctor couldn’t understand. This only stood to shake you more. Though in that moment, more than his words, the realization that you couldn’t give him children pained you more.

It took you a moment to comprehend that the strangled cry that echoed through the room was yours. Tears carelessly spilled over, as you continued to cry out.

Seto’s composure finally broke, as he reached over, slipping a hand through yours.

You brought it up to your chest, clutching it with both hands, as you fell forward over and over again while you wept apologizing with each breath.

You felt you had failed him.

“My sincerest apologies, I didn’t know you and Mr. Kaiba were actively trying to conceive,” the doctor offered.

“Give us some space,” Seto ordered in response.

You heard footsteps leading away before the door opened and closed.

“You have nothing to be sorry for,” Seto spoke with what felt like almost a forced gentleness as he brought himself to wrap his arms around you again, sitting on the bed, his chin resting on your crown.

Arms tightly holding you against your violent convulsions, his steady breathing eventually helped you calm down. He held you against your soft sobs, until you wore yourself out.

“I knew you wouldn’t want it,” you finally whispered in a pinched voice. “We can still try. At least tell me, is it because you think I’m too young or because—”

“I lost my mother that way,” he abruptly cut off your disoriented speaking. “Twenty three years later, I have no intention of losing you the same way.”

You were stunned, both by his unexpected confession, along with the content of what he had revealed to you.

“Seto, I’m so sorry.”

“I told you to stop apologizing,” he snapped.

“No, about your mother.”

“It was a long time ago,” he dismissed distantly. If he was this traumatized by it, you wondered how he could treat Mokuba with so much affection. You wondered if time had washed away his resentment, or if he never felt any to begin with.
“I’ve always thought you were too young for me to burden you with the responsibility of bearing my children at twenty one, but now especially, I feel that way. Let this go. When you’re older, we will conceive again, I’ll make sure that we do,” he assured.

“I heard what the doctor said –”

“I saw your test results,” he dismissed. “Your health is not something we can’t turn around. You don’t want this right now, you’re only holding on to it because you feel it’s final. There’s nothing I can’t do. If when, it’s not possible here in Japan, I’ll take you to where it is.”

“So what are you asking me?”

“Don’t make me say it,” he growled in reluctance as he pulled away.

“I can’t do it,” you defied stubbornly. “I won’t.”

He called out your name in exasperation.

“Last night I said that there was nothing I couldn’t afford, but losing you this way, I can’t afford.”

“I won’t do it!” you shouted at him.

His features creased, eyes narrowing at you in thought for a few moments.

“I see. If that’s how you feel, then we’re done here,” he finally concluded vaguely. His tone was spine chillingly cold.

He packed his laptop into his briefcase, along with a few papers from the top of the cupboard. Wordlessly, he picked up his briefcase, before stalking across the room towards the door without sparing you another glance.

You looked up at the sickly white ceiling, tears stinging at the corners of your eyes.

“Are you leaving?” you questioned in utter disbelief.

“Do you expect me to stay here all night arguing with you about something I can’t convince you on?” He still wasn’t looking at you. You felt a knot suffocating your throat. You finally found your voice again to speak when his hand landed on the door handle.

“If you leave me here Seto, the moment you walk through that door, there will be nothing between us anymore. I don’t need a man that would abandon me at a time like this. One more step and I will divorce you,” you threatened, choking on your tears.

You watched his fingers wrap around the door handle.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, the reader speaks a handful of different languages, including Japanese, English, French, Korean and mandarin, at least from what we’ve seen so far. I’m just going to go along the assumption that Kaiba does to.
You heard him release a laboured sigh as he swung the door open, before slamming it back closed after a moment’s thought.

“I’m going to put my briefcase in the car and take care of the papers for you to be discharged so I can take you home. Why are you always such a flight risk?” His voice was rough against his best attempts at maintaining composure. “This is why I said you were too young to bear the emotional weight of this situation. How could you possibly think even for a second that I would abandon you while you were carrying my child? You’re dishonouring the Kaiba name, and in turn yourself!” he barked, losing the battle against his temper.

You watched with your lips slightly agape, his words slowly seeping into your consciousness. As harrowing as they were, they afforded you some sanity against your jumbled thoughts.

“I’m sorry, I must have lost my mind for a moment; I overreacted,” you offered stonily, reflecting the perfectly poised mask he usually wore, biting back tears.

“Don’t make that face,” he commanded as he watched you.

“I don’t know what you mean,” you dismissed, as you tore the IV tube from your arm, wincing as it stung. Wiping away the droplets of blood seeping from where the needle had been, you heard him hiss.

“Why would you do that,” he growled, momentarily distracted from what he had previously been saying, as he walked back across the room to you in a few strides, grabbing your arm to inspect it.

“It’s fine,” you brushed him off.

“Look at me,” he ordered, forcibly cupping your face and tilting it up to look at him. He narrowed his eyes as he spoke. “Curse at me all you want, scream at me if you must, but don’t hold it in. It’s not good for you or the baby. Not that I agree with your decision, I don’t, but we’ll discuss that at home.”

“There’s nothing to discuss. Kodama can only be passed on to an heir of the blood. I do not have the leisure of having the liberal inheritance laws that Kaiba Corp. has.”

You winced as you heard your own words falling against your ears. They stung him; you didn’t need to see the look in his eye to know that.

“I didn’t realize you considered the future of my company so triflingly.”
“I didn’t mean it like that,” you countered the moment you heard your own words.

“You’re not well – ”

“Are you calling me mental?” you interrupted accusingly.

“Physically,” he gritted his teeth.

Hormones were definitely governing your brain.

...

Enduring through the exceedingly long lecture the hospital staff had given you as you left the hospital, you were careful not to be seen by reporters, paparazzi or fans as you entered the passenger’s seat of your car.

You sunk back into your seat exhausted, subconsciously blocking out all thoughts involving your current predicament. You would avoid considering them for a moment longer, you told yourself.

You pulled out your phone and began to mindlessly scroll through your Instagram feed.

“Huh, I didn’t know they sold yukgaejang here,” you noted in the passing as you saw an actress from your agency share a picture of the dish from a local hole-in-the wall restaurant on her story.

“Where?” you suddenly heard a gruff voice ask from beside you.

“Where’s what?” you inquired confused.

“What you said you wanted to eat.”

“It’s a small hole in the wall restaurant nearby, and I didn’t say I wanted to eat it. What got your interest?”

“I’m willing to do anything if it makes your red blood count go up,” he muttered somewhat angrily, though mostly to himself.

“You’re willing to take me to a shabby restaurant that you once said – and I quote – you would rather die before stepping in, to make my blood cell count go higher?” Despite your current state of distress, you were highly amused. You would take him up on the offer, partially because you were craving beef stew, partially to watch him suffer because you were really a sadist.

“Yes,” he growled through gritted teeth. “Where is it?”

You gave him the address, which he entered into the GPS before making a turn into a narrow road as the device instructed.

You watched his scowl grow increasingly tighter with each moment you were seated under the orange glow of the old, black metal lamps of the small restaurant. You took off the mask you had worn to avoid attention and placed it on the iron table you were seated across, studying how he sat on the metal chair with his arms tightly crossed, attempting to make contact with as little of the surrounding surfaces as possible.
You chuckled.

“You don’t mean to tell me you’ve never been in a place like this?”

“No. Should I have been?” he shot back with disgust tainting his words. You on the other hand thought the establishment was charming. It was poorly lit compared to the chandelier illuminated ones you two usually frequented but it was homely. There was distant chatter of other patrons on the other end of the hall.

“I don’t see why not.”

“I don’t see why you do, assuming you do.”

“It’s calming,” you began before you heard an ear shattering crash of metal, followed by a chef loudly shouting at another in the kitchen. Seto raised his eyebrow at you, challenging your point, as he motioned towards the steady clinking of chopsticks against dishes and the constant background noise seeping in from the nearby road.

“Define calming to me,” he taunted.

“Not having a stiff collared waiter pouring me a bitter alcohol I don’t enjoy and the absence of a contract that I’m pressured to finalize in my favour looming over me.”

“Fair enough,” he conceded; the corner of his lip turning into a smirk.

Still, it was evident that the unnervingly handsome CEO in front of you had never had the occasion to be in an establishment such as this, even without the information the conversation that had just concluded had afforded you. You’ve never seen the man look so displaced or uncomfortable, as when he cautiously picked up a metal chopstick from the sliding wooden box on the table with his fore and middle fingers, inspecting it meticulously with a hint of disdain.

“Is this hygienic?” he inquired, his lip turned up. You could understand his concern, you yourself was a germaphobe.

“A little bacteria does wonders on your immune system,” you joked. You watched his brows dip deeper towards his eyes.

“You shouldn’t be eating here while you’re expecting.” Clearly the humour was lost on him.

“Relax my darling, it was a joke,” you cooed.

“Don’t patronize me.”

He reluctantly ordered a bowl of spicy pork and tofu stew for himself at your insistence and you placed your order as well.

By the time the two clay bowls were placed in front of you, he had wiped both yours and his utensils at least seven times with serviettes from the metal dispenser.

You watched intently as he hesitantly brought the first spoonful of soup to his mouth, anxiously anticipating his reaction.

“It’s edible,” he commented, as he proceeded to stir the dish with his chopsticks.

You clapped slightly as a grin spread across your face before picking up yours.
You were hunched over your tablet in bed, reading what was possibly – at least by your standards – the worst rebranding proposal you’ve ever had the displeasure of reviewing. Adjusting the silk strap of your night gown which had irritatingly slipped past your shoulders again for the hundredth time, you furiously typed a strongly worded email to the marketing strategist that had written it.

Hearing the bedroom door open, you looked over slightly startled to see your husband emerging from the doorway, no laptop in hand. It was barely half past nine; you hadn’t expected him back from his study for at least another few hours.

“You can turn the lights off if you want to sleep,” you spoke absentmindedly, eyes and fingers never leaving the screen in front of you. You never received a response but the lights dimmed.

Making a note of how curious it was that he would be going to bed at such a peculiar hour of the evening, you continued typing. You only tore your gaze away from your work when you felt the small strip of space on your side of the bed to your right, dipping next to you. Unraveling your legs from its crossed position as you fell towards the opposite direction to avoid falling into him, you looked up questioningly.

His hand reached over for your tablet, removing it from your grip before setting it down on the nightstand.

His left hand wrapped around your shoulders, pulling you against him, as he managed to fit himself between you and the edge of the bed. He wrestled with the sheets for a few moments before pulling it over both of you. You cramped your neck to look at his face without accidentally bumping your forehead against his jaw.

“What are you doing? I have work to do. I’m sure you do too,” you protested as he sunk underneath the sheets slightly, forcibly pulling you with him. “Seto I think you’re having an identity crisis, this is usually what I try to do and you give me the –I have a multi-billion dollar corporation to run – spiel,” you mocked him; hoping insults would stimulate a response.

Instead he curved in towards you, your head forced to rest against his chest and shoulder. You bent your knees to accommodate the confining position he forced you into between the curves of his knees and his chest.

“What are you doing? I have work to do. I’m sure you do too,” you protested as he sunk underneath the sheets slightly, forcibly pulling you with him. “Seto I think you’re having an identity crisis, this is usually what I try to do and you give me the –I have a multi-billion dollar corporation to run – spiel,” you mocked him; hoping insults would stimulate a response.

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“Do I have your attention now?” he asked huskily as his right hand tilted your chin up to look at him. You didn’t have much choice, his blue eyes and wild fringe was all your field of vision was occupied by.

He leaned in as he held your chin in place, planting his lips over yours, his left hand pulling you into him as much possible. His kiss progressively became rougher and rougher until you were lying on your back, with the fingers of his left hand sprawled under your left shoulder blade, while he leaned slightly over you from your right. He continued kissing you from his position above you. One of your bent knees fell unfolded over the bed.

His right hand against your left cheek slowly slipped down past your collarbone, gently down your left arm. You could tell his movements were careful.

“What are you doing?” you panted as his lips worked against your jaw bone.
“I missed you,” he rasped, his lips brushing against your skin with each syllable. Your brows knitted together skeptically. He wanted something.

“We can’t do this,” you breathed against the side of his face as his fingers played with the lace hem of your black nightie that had slipped down the thigh of your raised knee.

“I heard it’s healthy,” he replied darkly. You wondered if you had heard him cackle silently as he said this.

“Seto! My condition is very sensitive,” you whined as you slapped him across the shoulder.

“Yes but I didn’t hear them say anything about not having sex, did you?” he smirked deviously.

Chapter End Notes

*Yukgaejang : Spicy beef and vegetable soup.
You were convinced that strenuous physical activity included intercourse though in that moment, you couldn’t read his expression and begin to guess if he was serious.

Your brows knitted tighter, something told you sex wasn’t what he was after. So you waited impassively, involuntarily moaning occasionally as his lips grazed over sensitive spots.

“Let’s try again in a few years,” he breathed against your ear.

Here we go. That’s what you were waiting for.

“So this is why you came looking for me this early in the night,” your voice was unfeeling. Seto Kaiba, with the exception of the very rare occasion, would never shower you with affection without an ulterior motive.

He continued running his lips over the side of your neck. You wondered if he felt uncomfortable addressing the issue without occupying himself this way.

He didn’t seem to mind your dispassionate state as he kissed you.

“My opinion on this is solely based on your wellbeing,” he stated, as he gently laid his chest over yours, careful to distribute his weight on his folded arms instead of your body. He spoke with his face buried in the crook of your neck. “Do I want children? Many, but I’m more than confident that there will be a time for that later on. I’m nothing if I’m not honest. If I give you my word that we’ll conceive again when it’s safe for you to carry it to term, will you give this madness up?”

His voice while composed, felt chilling against your nerves.

“Madness?” you asked outraged, turning instinctively towards him and accidently finding your face buried in his hair.

“Don’t pick apart my words,” he ordered clenching his jaw.

Your pride wouldn’t allow you to tell him that you were afraid.

“I don’t have the luxury to base my decision on my wellbeing,” you returned coldly.

The dynamic was hostile and contradicting, he was holding you tenderly, and yet there was distance plaguing his embrace, his words unkind and harrowing, though perhaps he was speaking with the voice of reason and you in that moment were averse to hearing it.

He pulled away, caging you with his arms as he loomed over you.

“You keep saying Kodama needs an heir, but without you, Kodama loses the only living
descendent. Then not only will Kodama be at a loss for an heir, so will Kaiba Corp. I’ll also be without a wife.” His words were stern and intentionally cutting.

“You can remarry,” you shot back carelessly.

“So you admit it then. You will die giving birth, if you get that far. You’re being impulsive and thoughtless!”

You only perceived after your palm had made contact with the side of his cheek and seen his head turn slightly towards his right, the severity of your reaction. The sharp echo of flesh hitting flesh fell against your ear as it resounded across the bedroom. Your hand fell back to your side as you lay there mortified. You hadn’t meant to slap him, and yet you felt too strongly that his words had earned it for you to apologize.

You watched a small hairline of blood appear over his cheek bone where your nail had grazed him. He reached a hand to wipe away at it before droplets seeped out again, recolouring the thin cut. You were sure, given the intensity of your violent reaction that it must have stung, despite how invincible he was rumoured to be.

When his blue eyes looked back at you, they were menacing. You sucked in a sharp breath, heart climbing to your throat as it stuttered with nervousness.

“I will not lose the woman I love because of her childish stubbornness,” his blue eyes aflame, his voice was a shade darker and deeper than you’ve ever heard before. “I told myself I wouldn’t force your hand, but if this is how you’re going react, you’re infinitely more childish than I thought you to be and I’m beginning to think I should. I won’t allow this – ”

“You have no right,” you stressed every word bitterly; “I have no reason to fall at your mercy. There’s nothing I lack compared to you and I will not tolerate you constantly putting me down.”

“And yet I tolerate you slapping me at your whim.”

“It’s my body, you don’t get a say in how I deal with it. You also don’t need to force yourself to tolerate me in your life.”

“Stop speaking nonsense,” he finally sighed, taking the initiative to lower his tone before you. “It’s your body and you have every right, I will concede, but the child you will be carrying is mine, and when something goes wrong, that’ll be my burden to bear. You’re foolish and don’t know me very well if you think this doesn’t concern me.” He watched you for a few more moments and continued at your silence. “We don’t have the luxury to make an impulsive decision here, there’s more on the line than just your life, though ultimately that is the only thing I will consider.”

“You’re willing to put my wellbeing over the needs of your corporation?”

“Yes.”

“Then for once in my life I’m going to be selfish and do as I please.”

He growled your name through gritted teeth in exasperation, his fingers digging into the sheets around you.

“Are you going to continue to do the exact opposite of everything I tell you to?” You remained silent in defiance of his words. “What is it that you doubt? My commitment? My sincerity?”

“This doesn’t involve you,” you icily shut him out. You saw his expression twitch.
“This has everything to do with me!”

“I think you overestimate your value in my life,” you declared as you dug your nails into his wrist, prying it away from your side as you slipped away from the bed.

Your words were unnecessarily harsh. It was intentional. You’ve never had someone be so involved in your life and despite the circumstances, his insistence to be so close was suffocating and frightening, as if you were losing the reins on your own life. It was his right and yet you felt you depended on him too much. You’ve known him for less than a hundred days and now you were expecting his child. It was madness.

“Or perhaps you underestimate the impact and consequence of this decision on mine!” he bellowed behind you, paralyzing you as his tone fell over you.

The conversation had progressed too far in the wrong direction for it to be reined back in towards a resolution or compromise; you were both painfully aware of this. You somewhat regretted your noncompliant behaviour.

You heard the bedroom door slam shut behind you and the walls around you tremble.

Returning to the only thing you’ve ever known how to do well, you picked up your tablet from where your husband had previously set it down, and immersed yourself in your work, occupying your thoughts away from the fallout that was burning down your sanity.

…

You woke up to a dim room, your limbs felt disoriented; you were sleeping on the wrong side of the bed, your neck awkwardly angled over a curved hardness, your face smothered in fabric.

You didn’t recall falling asleep, though the last hour you remembered was a little after one in the morning sprawled in small white figures across the top corner of your tablet.

Your fingers twitched reflexively as your body returned to consciousness, you felt them grazing over fabric, eliciting a groan from above you.

You realized your neck was resting over an arm when it folded over your shoulder from under you, while another draped over the small of your back. The first arm almost immediately recoiled, as you felt something shifting underneath you.

“You’re drenched,” you heard a rough voice in your ear, disorienting you further. Pulling yourself in to stabilize yourself following the shift, you lifted your head to look up, to see your husband’s blue eyes peering down at you.

“You’re on my side of the bed.”

“You’re the one who fell asleep on mine,” he pointed out, though observing where he was, you realized he was inches from falling off the edge. You were surprised he was tolerating you, let alone speaking to you. He seemed to possess a more trained patience than you and one more extensive than you had given him credit for.

His hand swiped away at the bare skin of your back which your night gown revealed, again. You realized you felt clammy and uncomfortable.
“I’ll have the antibiotics that were prescribed to you picked up tomorrow.”

“I was prescribed antibiotics?”

“In case you came down with a fever like this,” he explained as he closed his eyes again. “I gave it some thought,” he continued after a while, “If you’re so intent on this, I will do everything in my power to support you. I do not agree with your decision but I will respect your wishes. That being said, I do require you to retract your earlier words regarding my significance in your life.”

Allowing his words to make sense in your sleep deprived state; you felt elation seeping into you.

“My emotions got the better of me, I’m sorry. You’re my better half, I would never mean that,” you spoke sweetly, feeling your anger melting away, as you pushed yourself up to kiss his cheek.

His eyes still closed, you saw him wince, though he suppressed it well causing it to be almost unnoticeable. Realizing your lips had grazed his cut, fingers lightly brushed around it, apologetically, not wanting to draw attention to it with words.

He caught your fingers blindly, with the hand that was draped over your back moments ago, bringing it to his lips, smirking.

“Better half huh?”

He enunciated those words in such way – almost unfamiliarly – that caused the colour to rise in your cheeks.

A few more moments passed before the elation slowly deteriorated into anxiety and dread. Perhaps those were the original emotions over which you had forcefully planted your obligatory happiness. Now, having convinced Seto to stand behind your decision, you felt worse, as if you were forced into a corner with the compulsion to honour your decision.

What was expected of you all sounded rational, except human emotions weren’t coloured black and white, they materialized in layers upon layers, especially during sensitive, consequential situations such as this. Often, one or even several conversations weren’t enough to solve through these layers. Perhaps even following such a resolution, sentiments change. The human heart wasn’t static and constant; it changed and evolved to contradict sometimes even themselves from moments ago. This was one such unfortunate moment.

You wondered why you had fought a war for a notion you weren’t entirely sure you championed.

It was strange and cruel how such an epiphany was only offered to you following receiving what you had wanted.

You felt compelled to be honest. Pride only prolonged misunderstanding and uncertainty and you had played this card for long enough.

“Seto,” you began, but the words wouldn’t produce themselves to follow.

“What is it?” he inquired as he looked down at your silence. “I’m listening,” he assured huskily when you didn’t speak.

“I’m scared,” your voice left you strained.

“I’m aware.”

His fingers tightened around you.
“I see that you haven’t picked up the item yet, I’ve added a few more things that may be of use,” a text from Miyuki read first thing the next morning.

“I’ll pick it up this morning,” you replied, leaving the bed.

Walking past the common living room of the manor that Sunday morning, you heard Mokuba’s voice. Wondering if you had misheard, you walked in. It was actually the first time you had walked into a room that wasn’t a dining room or a bedroom.

“Morning,” you greeted in drawn out syllables.

He whipped his head around.

“Hey little sis,” he greeted distractedly as he focused his attention back on one of the wide screen televisions.

“I didn’t know you would be visiting,” you smiled as you sat next to him on the armrest of the mint sofa, “When did you get here?”

“Why are you on every channel?” he bitched, returning your question with another question as he flipped through the channels.

“How many channels are on here?”

“Every channel Seto can afford.”

“So…all of them? That doesn’t sound right, I’m sure at least one of those channels doesn’t involve me,” you challenged skeptically.

“You did a makeup commercial in France? For Chanel?” he exclaimed amazed as he momentarily paused his incessant changing.

“I thought that contract expired,” you mused as you watched.

“Hey, is Seto in the bedroom?” he asked suddenly turning his attention back to you.

“No, is he gone?”

“Looks that way.”

“I see, well tell him I’ve left on an errand if he comes back.”

“What errand could you possibly have at eight in the morning on a Sunday? Dressed like that.” He motioned to your all black attire; tight fitting black knit dress with cap sleeves that reached mid-thigh, flat black ankle boots and black baseball cap over your free flowing hair, with a black face mask slung loosely over your fingers.

It just so happened that you had somewhere to be where you didn’t want to attract attention, but he didn’t need that information.
“Nothing that your brother would care about, I’ll see you later,” you evaded his question, slipping out of the room.

As you drove away from the mansion, you thought you had seen Seto’s car pass you in the other direction, but you couldn’t be certain.

Parking your car next to the pavement leading to the Fourth Intersection station of the Domino subway, you covered the lower part of face with your mask before pulling the front of your baseball cap over your eyes. Slipping out discreetly into the streets as you blended in with the pedestrians, you clutched your phone tightly with one hand, the other holding down the edge of your cap, securing it in place.

The station was busy this time of morning despite it being a Sunday, which worked to your advantage as the state of pandemonium which ensued during morning rush hour distracted the crowds from having the leisure to pay attention to you.

Descending the stairs which opened to the ticket gates and the public lockers, you scanned the number over the faded grey-green lockers on the far wall, careful to pay attention to your surroundings, or at least so you thought.

As you reached locker 399, you noticed the door was hanging on its hinges, thoroughly crushed. The contents were empty; you didn’t need to be standing in front of it to know that.

A shiver gripped your spine.

Weighing the possibilities and your options without taking a step further, you felt something push up against your back – a figure loomed taller than you. You could tell from the motion that it was intentional. It forcefully urged you away from the wall of lockers by your shoulders.

“Don’t look back and keep walking if you want to live.”

Chapter End Notes

When I mean face mask, I mean the surgical masks that people wear when the air quality becomes very poor, also commonly worn by idols.
You could hear your heartbeat drumming against your ears, eyes darting between the edges of your vision. Despite your erratic breathing and disarrayed thoughts, your mind recognized that rough voice.

Leaning your head back into his chest, you opened your mouth to speak as you were forcefully walked forward towards the exit.

“Don’t speak,” the voice ordered you. You complied.

Dusty light filtering through the staircase into the crowded station, you imagined his blue eyes sharply analyzing the hectic surroundings from above you. His long fingers digging protectively into your shoulders, you could feel his tone chest pressed against your back as if he were a shield. Your eyes fell with the hand that slipped to your stomach as he swiftly moved to stand next to you as he walked, to see him clutching a gun.

“Keep your eyes down,” he barked as you moved to look up at him, breathing intensifying, though his own deep and steady breaths against you offered you some solace in this entirely disorienting situation.

You could feel a cramp tightening in your lower abdomen as you ascended the staircase.

He pushed you into the passenger seat of the car you had thought he had driven past you earlier that morning.

You threw your head back clutching your stomach as you felt it pulse intensely for a moment.

Seto jumped into the driver’s seat, tearing away from where he was parked into the road at light speed.

You felt feverish and your breathing felt laboured as you spoke.

“What was that about?”

“Is it difficult for you to not jump into danger the moment I take my eyes off of you?” he roared without sparing you a glance. “Why aren’t you with your guards? Do you even have your gun with you?” The man was positively livid. “There were at least three armed men following you, did you
seriously not notice? You’re pregnant, so for the love of our unborn child if you don’t care for yourself, stay the fuck where I can see you!”

“It’s a public space,” you contested softly. “They couldn’t attack without gaining attention –”

“I don’t think you realize how incredibly small you are; it’s not that hard to kidnap you, especially when you’re unarmed. Anyone can just pick you up and carry you! What would you have done if I didn’t get to you first?”

You had no explanation to offer him.

“I’m sorry.”

“You can’t keep thinking about yourself if you want to follow through with this. Do you even comprehend how much danger you were in?”

“I apologized, what more would you like to hear? I don’t understand why you are still so upset,” you questioned feeling increasingly fainter, mind completely rejecting the near death situation you had narrowly escaped for the sake of coping.

"You're young, and my wife, and carrying our child, you're my responsibility, the biggest responsibility I have! For someone with a near genius IQ, how can you be this dense?"

This coming from the president and CEO of a major, multi-billion dollar gaming corporation - the biggest in the world - was somewhat terrifying.

"I'm not that young." This was starting to sound like a broken record tape.

"Being at the turn of your twenties is young! It's a very sensitive age to even be married. I was careless. I should never have gotten you pregnant. I suppose it’s not your fault that you don’t know how to handle this. Given that it was your first time, at least I should have known better," he slammed his palm against the steering wheel, left hand covering his face for a moment, fingers splayed out over his features before he ran it through his hair in exasperation.

"So you're blaming yourself. You’re doing this out of obligation, because you feel a sense of duty. Dismiss the feeling of compulsion; I have no intention of being a burden."

"No, I’m taking responsibility of you because I – ” he interrupted himself sighing. “If it were a mere feeling of obligation, I would have sent guards after you.”

That sentence spoke volumes. He was right, he didn’t need to come charging in and act as your human shield.

"I'm a consenting adult; I did what I did with you fully aware of the potential consequences. We’re not in this situation because of you, I don’t regret it and I’ll be more careful, so please just calm down, you’re scaring me.” The last part of your sentence you just about wheezed.

This got his attention as he finally tore his gaze from the road. He extended over his left arm as he studied you, hand resting against your forehead.

You felt much too out of it to be around his level of energy and aggression this morning.

“Drop me off in front of Kodama,” you said as you dropped your head back against the seat,
closing your eyes.

“Your antibiotics are in the glove compartment, take it with water,” he ordered as he reached an arm towards the backseat before handing you a bottle of water. “I’m taking you home, left to your own devices; you’ll work yourself to death. You’re in no condition to work.”

“Don’t I need to eat something before I take these?” you inquired as you read the fine print on the side of the lidded container.

“Did you not have breakfast?” he asked exasperation evident in his tone.

“I’m guessing that’s a yes to my earlier question.”

You heard him growl.

“You’re not taking this pregnancy seriously.”

“I am,” you defied.

“Taking those antibiotics without food will worsen your acid reflux. If I can’t even trust you to eat properly, I will need to rethink my decision about this whole situation.”

‘Do whatever you want,’ you thought to yourself at his bluff as you felt the lids fall over your eyes, too heavy for you to hold open anymore.

…

Roused to the sensation of being suspended in mid-air, your eyes opened centimetres away from Seto’s face, the tip of his nose brushing against your cheek bone, as he laid you on the bed.

He pulled the sheets over you.

“I’ll have a maid bring you breakfast,” he offered as he took off his trench coat and threw it at your feet over the covers, before pulling off his shirt over his head and heading towards the closet to presumably put on something less constricting.

“Are you going to work?” you called out to him from your spot on the bed.

“I’ll be in the study if you need me.”

“Can you not work from here?”

“I have too much to get done.” You hadn’t expected him to say yes but disappointment washed over you all the same.

…

You heard a knock at your door after a maid had taken away your breakfast tray.
“Come in,” you called from the walk-in closet, as you fumbled with the lock of your vintage rosewood and jade jewellery box, as it slid irritatingly across the glass surface of the storage centerpiece that was installed in the middle of the closet.

“I heard from Seto that you weren’t feeling very well,” you heard Mokuba’s voice come through from the bedroom. “Where are you?”

“I’m in here,” you called out again. He followed your voice through the open doors.

It didn’t seem as if Mokuba knew you were expecting. You were fairly sure of this – unless Seto had specifically warned him against it – as he hadn’t thrown a one-man festival in celebration yet.

“What are you doing?” he asked bemused as he watched you shaking the carved handle on one of the doll-sized drawers as it stuck to the frame.

You had forgotten your password to your Swiss bank account you needed to manage and this was where you kept the back up. In contrast to your husband, you were embarrassingly analogue, but in your defense, you had your fair share of trust issues with technology.

“I’m trying to jog my memory,” you explained vaguely as his frown deepened.

“That doesn’t tell me anythi – ” he interrupted himself as another drawer popped open revealing the blue eyes card Seto had given you. His eyes hovered over the painted blue dragon as they contorted with suspicion. “Why do you have that?”

“This?” you questioned, holding it up between your fingers, “Seto gave it to me.”

“That’s the worst lie I’ve ever heard,” he declared confidently as he snatched the card away from you. You sucked air in through your teeth as you feared it ripping.

“I’m not lying Mokuba, he asked me to hold on to it.”

“Yeah, right. Do you know how many people he’s almost killed – ah I mean persuaded in gathering his three blue eyes?” he inquired, slightly faltering. “This card might as well be his soul, and you expect me to believe he gave it to you? Was he conscious and sober when he did?”

“He did what now?”

“Stop corrupting her mind and hand it back Mokuba, I did give it to her,” Seto’s voice emerged from the doorway of the closet as he leaned against the doorframe, his hands in the pockets of his slacks.

You watched the younger Kaiba’s mouth visibly hang open. It took him a moment to recover in order to tear his gaze away from his older brother before handing the card reluctantly back to you.

“Wrapped around her finger,” Mokuba taunted as he walked out of the closet grinning like an idiot, bumping his shoulder against Seto’s as he disappeared. Seto opened his mouth to say something but Mokuba was long gone.

You stifled a laugh.

“What are you trying to reach?” Seto asked brushing off his brother’s comment without disputing it.

“My Swiss bank password.”
“How do you forget something that important and why do you keep it in an old box?”

“I have more than one bank account and I have trust issues because of hackers.”

“That doesn’t sound concerning at all,” he said raising an eyebrow as he pried your fingers away from the handle, attempting to unlock it himself.

“I swear to you it’s all legally accounted for.”

“I’m sure.”

Having retrieved the information you needed and having that issue taken care of, you watched Seto walking over to the bed where his laptop was now sitting.

“I thought you couldn’t work in here?”

“Left to your own devices, you’d just continue working.” This was true. “I’m here to prevent that.”

“Yes, master,” you mocked as you slipped under the covers next to where he sat. Picking up your phone, you started to message Miyuki.

“Change of location; Shikoku station, locker 385, same password,” you texted her.

You were confident your cellphone connection was secure so as it stood, either Miyuki was working against you, or she, you or both of you were being followed. Either possibility made the hair on the back of your neck stand.

“What’s with you?” you heard your husband’s voice abruptly cut through your thoughts.

“Huh?”

“You’ve been out of it since I found you at the station. What exactly were you doing there?”

“Nothing you need to concern yourself with,” you replied dismissively.

“I try to stay out of my wife’s business because it generally doesn’t concern me, but if whatever you’re doing is putting you in danger, I won’t allow it.”


“Is something funny?” he seethed in a low voice.

You watched him incredulously, trying to predict the most diplomatic way to answer that question without short-circuiting his fuse. Ultimately deciding it would afford you a better fate to receive that question rhetorically, you excused yourself from the bedroom.

“I didn’t come in here to work so you could go gallivanting outside,” he grumbled as you slipped away from the bed.

“It’ll only be a moment,” you assured. He narrowed his eyes.

“You can make whatever phone call in here.”

“Even married couples need limits Seto,” you countered. For a man who was generally hostile, detached and looked as if he greatly valued personal space, these limitations didn’t seem to reach you in many instances, and while you were grateful for this, sometimes he smothered you.
Ironically, despite what one would expect from a relationship with Seto Kaiba, your walls seemed to tower higher than his at times.

Closing the bedroom door behind you, you walked over to the landing of the third floor down the hallway. Sitting on the top stair, you dialled the number to a head of your security and intelligence department of Kodama. She had previously been employed at your entertainment agency before you had promoted her to your gaming corporation to keep an eye on operations following the rough takeover.

“Ayumi,” you greeted as the young woman answered. You could hear the agitation in her voice as she answered, audibly unnerved by personally receiving a phone call from you.

“Good Morning, I wasn’t expecting a phone call from you ma’am,” she responded nervously.

“Of course you weren’t, you had no reason to. You’re not in trouble if that’s what’s concerning you.”

You heard a suppressed sigh of relief.

Contrary to her soft manner of conduct and endearing appearance, the girl was as tough as nails. She was martial arts trained and highly perceptive. She would either be a competent partner for Miyuki or her worst nightmare. You realized you had a type.

You briefed her on the situation so far. As you began to tell her where the new location for information exchange was, your eyes flickered to the foot of the staircase, where there seemed to be an oddly placed shadow casted from behind the wall.

Careful not to mention any sensitive information and without instructing her of what you expected of her, you slipped down the carpeted steps barefoot, sliding against the wall. You were two stairs away from the shadow when it turned and disappeared down the adjacent corridor.

“I’ll message you your instructions. Don’t move a muscle without my orders and be careful not to be seen,” you advised as you disconnected the line, intending to follow after the mysterious, conveniently disappearing shadow.

“Not be seen by who?” an abrupt voice accompanied by a hand on your shoulder thoroughly startled you. Releasing a high-pitched shriek reflexively, you whipped around to see Seto standing a step above you. Your intentions to follow the shadow momentarily fleeing from your conscious thought, you sank to your knees on your toes, burying your head in your knees as you folded your arms over. “What the hell’s with you?” you heard him snap.

“That’s dangerous for the baby,” you hissed in your alarmed state, for an instant forgetting who you were addressing.

“Why are you so on edge?” he inquired with a raised eyebrow.

“Just,” you inhaled sharply, “don’t do that,” you advised in as pleasant a tone as you possibly could as you ascended the stairs past him.

The possibility of there being a spy in the manor was playing as if on a loop through your mind, drowning out all other thought.

You messaged the locker number and location to Ayumi, leaving her with the orders to plant a hidden camera and voice transmitter inside the locker immediately, while also instructing her to trail Miyuki, paying close attention to who she associates with and more importantly, if and who’s
following her.

You made a note to yourself to follow both of them.

Your fingers had wrapped around the door handle when Seto grabbed your wrist.

“What are you playing it?” he snarled.

“I’m going to have a nap. Do you want to join me?”

“You know what I mean by that,” his eyes narrowed at your deliberate attempt at distracting from the question.

“It’s work, do you want to have a nap?”

It was obvious he was far from convinced as he chose to dismiss it.

“Why waste your breath when you know the answer?” he dismissed as he placed his hand over yours to twist the door handle.

Surprisingly, when you woke up, he was still working at his laptop next to you. You felt a great deal better having taken the medication.

“What time is it?” you asked him, pulling yourself up to lean against his arm.

“Lunch,” he replied ambiguously as his eyes hovered over the corner of his laptop screen before shifting them to look over at you. “What’s with you?” he repeated

“Hmm?” you purred.

“You’re being oddly affectionate, first you asked me to work in the bedroom and now this,” he plainly stated.

This was your strategy to be adoring and compliant towards him when he gave into what you wanted but he appeared to be catching on.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

…

Dining was always a hundred percent more enjoyable when Mokuba was around – if you weren’t in an irritable mood. You wanted to say something eloquent along the lines of how he was radiated like a ray of sunshine and therefore a pleasure to be around but really, he was a master at taking the piss out of his older brother and this entertained you for days.

As the dishes were served, the overwhelmingly poignant stench of something assaulted your olfactory senses. You clasped a hand over your mouth reflexively, resisting the urge to gag.

“What’s upsetting you?” Seto asked, forehead creasing with concern as you crinkled your nose.

“The rice, I think,” you mumbled through your fingers, scrunching your eyes further.
“Take this away,” Seto ordered immediately, motioning towards the rice.

“I can’t believe you’re pregnant with his kid after knowing him for less than a month!” Mokuba blurted out as soon as the door closed behind the maid.

“You knew?” you exclaimed in disbelief, almost accusingly. You weren’t upset that your husband had disclosed the detail to his younger brother, they were immensely close. What you inferred from this was one thing; it meant that Seto was taking the pregnancy seriously.

“Mokuba! I told you to not – ”

“For the record, I’ve known your brother for almost three months now,” you interrupted your husband, feeling the desperate need to clear your name even in your nauseated state.

“Whatever, you still slept with him under ninety days.”

Seto just about choked on his water. The only reason you didn’t react was because your body was already fully occupied in suppressing your nausea.

“That’s enough Mokuba! I will not have you speaking to her that way.”

“What way is that exactly?” Mokuba inquired unfazed in a sing-song voice.

“One more word from you regarding the subject and I will kick you out of my mansion.”

“Like I said, wrapped around her finger,” he laughed.

“Don’t push it.”

“Interesting that you don’t defend yourself,” Mokuba continued with a Cheshire grin.

“Your petty insults are beneath me.”

“So you say.”

Yes, having him around was infinitely better.

…

Seto came to bed earlier that night, around late eleven, which you thought was strange but putting your paperwork away, decided to call it a night yourself.

You were lying on your back when he moved closer to you. This was interesting to you considering he usually pulled you into him or forcefully turned you to face him at night. Instead of draping an arm around you as he usually does, he very gently extended his fingers over your stomach, placing his hand over you, careful not to allow any weight to be felt.

His other hand slipped under your head, folding over your right shoulder, very slowly curving you into him, almost as if you were so fragile you would break.

“What are you doing?” you asked, unable to withhold your curiosity.
“What?”

“You’re not dragging me across the bed like your personal rag doll,” you joked.

“I’m not sure what you mean,” he denied huskily against your ear. You smiled into him, your lips brushing against his cheek, before turning towards him on your side, swinging your leg over his thigh, pulling yourself closer. “Comfortable?” he mocked, raising an eyebrow at you in amusement.

You purred in contentment against his lips.

…

“We need to announce our marriage,” Seto declared without warning the next morning during breakfast. Seeing him at breakfast was a rarity – though then again you were hardly ever present either – and so seeing him taking his place at the head of the table in the grand dining hall did make you briefly consider his reasons for suddenly being present.

You weren’t prepared, so you wouldn’t speak. You hoped silence would convey your disagreement to the notion. You spared him a glance before returning to the emails on your phone.

He watched you silently as you intentionally disregarded his words, drowning the room in tension.

“Are you averse to the idea?”

“I’m not in agreement with it, no.”

“Do you realize the gravity and consequence of the situation? I will not have people assume that my first born and the Kaiba heir was conceived out of wedlock.” His words expressed a sense of being final.

“You think I’m unaware?”

“An announcement will hardly change – between us – the fact that we’ve been married for the greater part of the past three months. Do you dislike the idea of being married to me or do you still doubt your conviction and devotion towards this relationship?”

It was neither and yet something in between. This was your entire future. The ambiguity afforded you mentally, an escape route when the relationship grew to be too straining. The thought that you could walk away without retaining any damage was selfishly comforting. The current development was slowly demolishing those comforts, and yet, a revelation to the public felt so final.

You called him your other half and yet you couldn’t answer.

Your silence was not the answer he had wanted.

Chapter End Notes
So just to add some more perspective, the reader here, I'm sure you've noticed, while extremely intelligent in her career, lacks a lot of emotional pillars required for a healthy relationship. She's come a long way but she still continues to be selfish, to an extent thoughtless and considerably stupid in her personal life, so do bear with her. I just imagine this being a little more compatible in comparison to Kaiba vs Kaiba, after all, opposites attract ;)}
Thank you for all the lovely comments as always, you have no idea how many of those conspiracies will actually come true in the next few chapters, I'm so cruel. Here's some revelation for all you impatient people. You know who I'm looking at.

Earnest Hemingway once said that if two people love each other, there could be no happy end. So you wondered, was a love unreciprocated also doomed to follow the same fate?

The flaw in your question was that your love was reciprocated.

“Forgive me if I made you believe I was asking for your opinion. I wasn’t. My previous statement was just that; a statement. You insist on having my child so our marriage will be announced regardless of your reservations. You have the rest of your life to figure out the issues you have with me and this relationship as you live through it, because whether you’re open to accepting it or not, this is the rest of your life. Your efforts are better invested in learning how to be a good mother since I’m sure you’ve never even held a baby before.”

This was not love.

“Forgive me for my insolence in assuming you ever allowed me an opinion in this relationship. Forgive me for momentarily forgetting that I was some doll that you shopped for. Do I have doubts? Yes I have doubts and the way you conduct yourself is causing all of it. I’m not your play thing and if you continue to treat me this way I will not hesitate in leaving you.”

“I will not have my child growing up in a broken home!” His voice caused the walls to tremble. “From the moment you insisted on having my child, you’ve given up your right to leave this relationship. You will live here and so will our child. Divorce is no longer an option I will allow you to even entertain, is that understood?”

Had you stepped on sensitive ground again? There was a searing pain in your chest.

“Is this a relationship or are you holding me captive? You can’t keep me against my wishes.”

“It’s a marriage, one that requires a higher level of maturity than you seem to possess. I can and I will if I must,” he declared darkly.

How could someone so beautiful be so cruel?

“You underestimate me Mr. Kaiba,” you contested raising an eyebrow.

“You are without a doubt one of the most influential women in this country in your own right Mrs. Kaiba,” he placed emphasis in his pronunciation of the name to convey possessiveness in a way that was deeply unsettling, “but if you think your power could rival mine you are sorely mistaken.”

He had never shown you the true extent of his power before and perhaps that has caused you to underestimate him, but in that moment, his display of dominance was terrifying and the painful
awareness that you couldn’t hold up against him if he employed his full efforts was even more frightening.

Your elbow anchored to the table, you clasped your hand against your mouth to muffle a sob that threatened to break. You poured all your effort into maintaining your composure in that moment. You inhaled deeply before raising your head. You wouldn’t allow him the satisfaction of breaking you.

You missed the concern that flashed across his face as you leaned forward as if about to cry, only to immediately disappear as you lifted your head, thoroughly composed.

“Very well. In the meanwhile, arrange for me to move into a separate room,” you were unfeeling and perfectly poised as your words left you, almost to a degree which anyone besides Seto Kaiba would have found chilling.

“You will do no such thing.”

“And why is that?”

“Your condition is too sensitive for me to leave you unsupervised.” His expression was unreadable, you couldn’t know if had meant that with any affection, though you doubted the mere possibility.

“Yes I’m sure my dear husband is so very concerned about my condition. Are you conceding that you will allow it after the child is delivered?”

“I will not have the mother of my children sleeping in a separate room. That is not the foundation I want to instill in them.”

“You’re despicable and I wouldn’t want to be with you if you were the last man on earth. You’re the most insolent, arrogant, conceited, thoroughly disagreeable, and impertinent of men and I can’t believe for a second that I was foolish enough to love you!” you shrieked, standing up from the table. “If you force me to stay with you, you will watch me waste away in this place until I eventually die like my mother did in an unhappy and lonely marriage with my father before I reach thirty so –”

“I would never allow that to happen,” he growled

“Damn right. I won’t allow that to happen to myself either,” you affirmed, “so fucking try me,” you challenged through gritted teeth.

“I thought you were different,” he seethed icily.

“You have no idea,” you agreed barely above a whisper, looking him dead in the eye. “This isn’t love, Seto, what you have for me isn’t love, and it’s forcing me to question my affections for you as well.”

Your composure was a façade because internally, you had descended into mayhem.

“Interesting how announcing our marriage could inspire such violent emotions. It’s very telling how you regard me. Your better half? Don’t make me laugh,” he sneered.

“Don’t you dare invalidate my feelings!”

“Then don’t invalidate mine,” he barked in response, blue eyes so sharp they could cut clean through the tension in the room.
“At the very least when I fell pregnant, I had hoped more compassion from you, but you’re the same cold man,” you hissed icily.

You drew in a deep breath before turning sharply on your heels and marching out of the dining room, your heels echoing across the space.

…

“Does the name Wakamura Tetsuo mean anything?”

As a matter of fact it did. This was the first question Ayumi posed to you during your phone conversation with her, immediately following you entering your office the next afternoon at the conclusion of a drama filming schedule.

You had worked overnight in your office following the devastating fallout with Seto the morning before. Throwing yourself into work you told yourself was how you healed, though really it was only a poor substitute – rather a toxic replacement – for the healthy relationship you lacked with your husband as well as your piss poor relationship with yourself.

Human intuition was a scary thing; the consuming fear that something was coming your way had plagued you the whole night. Clutching your gun in your left hand as if it was an extension of yourself, you had boiled all night in anxiety and dread. The irrational fear continued to torture you through the day.

Not having felt the need to sleep, and experiencing that same dry and irritable sense of wakefulness almost thirty-six hours following the last time you slept, you were starting to consider whether you were possibly suffering from insomnia.

Your husband, contrary to his declaration the morning prior of how he felt the strong compulsion to supervise you overnight hadn’t even felt the need to call you inquiring about your absence.

“And if it does?” you vaguely responded, focusing your attention back to Ayumi.

“There are two cars following Miyuki. I ran their licence plate numbers and they’re both registered under WD Holdings, an insurance firm, or rather a paper company associated with Wakaetsu Industries.”

“Wakaetsu? As in the weapons manufacturer?”

“Yes, Wakamura Tetsuo is the founder and president of the organization. I can look into his director board and other individuals of interest to see who ordered the tailing of our agent if you would like me to,” Ayumi offered diligently.

“No, that won’t be necessary. Good work. Continue to watch Miyuki from afar and assist her if she’s ever in danger. Send me the license plates and the registration records for now,” you ordered as you disconnected the line.

Wakamura Tetsuo was a founding member of Kodama, who went his separate way in the late nineteen seventies, a little over ten years following the company’s inception. This wasn’t common knowledge to anyone with a lower level of clearance than a board director since his presence in the company was short, fairly insignificant and his contributions scarce – at least scarcely recorded.
Cross referencing the registration records, against the information you had on Wakamura, it looked as if subsequent to his departure from Kodama, he founded his own weapons manufacturing corporation. The exact operations of the organization, including whether they dealt with a specific sector of the government either nationally or internationally, which weapons they specialized in manufacturing and who their primary clients were, remained vague and unknown.

During his time away, building his own weapons manufacturing corporation, Tetsuo had amassed immense wealth and power greatly exceeding what the former board members of Kodama – some he had founded the organization with – had managed to individually under the gaming corporation.

This mysterious corporation shrouded in nothing but questions immediately became a great source of concern and intrigue to you.

This interest became obsessive in your mind and afforded you the comfort of being able to drown out all other thoughts, including those of your broken marriage.

…

Intent on distancing yourself as much as you possibly could from your insufferable husband, eleven thirty-five at night found you entering the passcode to your penthouse. Unlocking the steel door, you opened it expecting to be shrouded in total darkness – at least until you fumbled your way to the light switch.

Instead, you walked into a find the chandeliers fully lit and glasses clinking distantly in the kitchen. Taking your heels off, you found a perfectly polished pair of shoes you recognized to be Seto’s at the doorway.

Mildly perplexed and tremendously irritated, you followed the sound of thick glass against marble to find him pouring himself a glass of whiskey, suit jacket shed somewhere, sleeves of his white dress shirt rolled up, tie loosened and his hair dishevelled.

You released a laugh that was almost manic. You understood you being here was predictable and yet the saying of how Japan was in the palm of your husband’s hand conveniently resurfaced in your mind.

“For someone who doesn’t drink, you know your alcohol,” he stated plainly as he swirled the amber liquid in his glass. He seemed a little off. As if it was more than his hair that was dishevelled.

“I bought it for such an occasion where my self-important husband broke into my humble abode and demanded it. Lord knows I don’t have any guests to entertain,” you returned sarcastically as you dropped your bag on the floor besides the sofa and fell onto the sofa yourself, staring through the skylight beyond the chandeliers which served as a domed roof. “If you came here to compliment my selection of liquor and that is all, kindly show yourself out, I’m afraid dealing with you for a moment longer will endanger my pregnancy. If you’re here to rub your influence in my face, talk to my attorney.”

You brought your arm up to cover your eyes from the light, darkening your field of vision.

You felt the cushion dipping next to you, his hips pushing against your waist as he sat down, forcing your body towards the back rest. When you lifted your arm, you saw he was still holding
the glass. The bitter stench that drifted around him made you aware that he had helped himself to a few glasses already.

You hated men who drank excessively. Groaning in annoyance, you turned away from him, wanting to avoid the pungent smell.

“I’ve come to realize that there’s no sense in forcing you to act like an adult, so I won’t.” You felt him place a hand over your waist. “I don’t want our children growing up the way we did.”

“Except I have no idea how you grew up, so I’m afraid I don’t entirely comprehend what you mean,” you bluntly challenged, facing the button tufted grey fabric.

You heard him sigh your name in frustration, right hand momentarily leaving your waist, presumably to run his hand through his hair.

“You can’t expect me to spend the rest of my life with a man I know nothing about,” you elaborated in a softer tone. “And you know what I’m afraid of the most Seto?”

“What?” he inquired at your silence.

“I’m afraid you’re not sharing this with me because you don’t…” what was it that you wanted to say? That you were afraid he wouldn’t spend the rest of his life with you? That he wasn’t serious about his commitment to you? He’s made it frighteningly certain that you two would never be separated from each other. “I’m afraid you will never be intimate with me.”

“You’re pregnant because I was intimate with you,” he disputed gruffly without sparing a thought.

“Emotionally.”

“Are you still considering leaving me?” It was unexpected, though ironically as expected of the man.

“Honestly, you’re right; I don’t have the influence to win over you. At my best, I’ll end up destroying both of us, and I don’t want that,” you kept your voice barely above a whisper. “You ask me if I want to leave, but if I wanted to, would you let me?”

“If I allowed you to.”

“No, where would I go?”

You heard him set his glass down against glass coffee table.

“Then why did you say what you did yesterday morning?” his voice sounded rougher than usual.

“Because my decision to stay with you should be a choice... I don’t want to stay because I’m trapped and you’re the most powerful man in the country. That’s an abusive relationship and that sort of imbalanced power dynamic isn’t something a child should be forced to experience growing up either. I spent my childhood locked up like that…and I…” you couldn’t help but choke on tears.

His hand slipped over your stomach, almost reassuringly, as if in understanding.

“I would never harm you with my influence.” His voice carried an edge and yet it was gentle. You turned on your back to face him.

“Tell me about your childhood,” you demanded abruptly, though your voice remained soft. You expected nothing, perhaps another fight, but never an actual answer. He picked up his glass again,
taking a large sip.

You watched his expressions painfully contorting into a tight scowl as he swallowed.

“My brother and I grew up in an orphanage after our parents passed. Gozaburo adopted us after he lost to me in a wager. It was a publicity stunt gone wrong though I found out later he had ulterior motives.” You could tell he was attempting to rush through it, though perhaps as a result of the alcohol in his system, he spoke slowly; his words drawn out. You squeezed his arm, urging him to continue as he stared distractedly into his glass in thought. “The man tormented Mokuba and I for years. He took everything I had from me,” his voice strained through his clenched jaw, “before I finally overthrew him and took over the company when I was fourteen. Does that offer you enough clarity about my past?” His voice carried a bitter tone that was reminiscent of the alcohol on his lips. “Does that make you feel more like my wife?” he inquired, narrowing his eyes at you.

His explanation felt like a slap in the face. It was sudden, unexpected, awfully blunt and while it lacked fine detailing to specifically inspire an emotional response, his tone hinted at remorse and struggle which roused sympathy and compassion in you.

“Look, I don’t need your pity,” he spoke again after a few moments of studying your expressions, his earlier tone of concealed torment absent without a trace, instead, an overbearing roughness was compensating it. “I’m telling you this so you understand why I’m so resolute in having our children grow up in an environment devoid of this negativity. Perhaps my methods weren’t the most effective. I overlooked your sentiments.”

You knew he didn’t want to hear your apology for what he has endured. That was his burden to bear, just as your past was yours. You could only hope to offer him a different future.

Recovering from your shock as his words processed, you pushed yourself up, wrapping your arms around his neck, pulling yourself into him.

“Thank you,” you whispered in his ear as you heard him setting down the glass. You folded your knee, securing your leg around his lap, straddling him; your black strapped, silk dress riding up to your hips as your hips sat against his.

You felt his arms wrap around your back, before one slowly travelled up to the back of your head, fingers tightening around your hair.

“Never spend the night out like that again,” you felt him drawing a stiff breath as he spoke. “I couldn’t think straight,” he admitted in a voice so low you barely understood.

He brought the hand in your hair down and placed it under your shoulder to adjust you in a way he could bring his lips against yours, but the moment his lips grazed yours and the bitter scent and taste seeped in, you immediately recoiled.

As you did, the thumb of his hand underneath your shoulder brushed against your hardened nipple. The dress didn’t allow for a bra. You mewled innocently at his touch, though unwittingly.

“You really hate bras don’t you?” he taunted darkly, rolling his thumb over your nipple again intentionally, extracting the same response from you. That wasn’t it.

He didn’t spare you the time dispute his statement. You saw a smirk spread over his lips as he moved himself against back rest of the sofa, taking you with him.

He untangled your legs from behind him, hooking his hands onto the crooks of your knees before sliding them down your thighs to grab your bare ass against your lace underwear which wasn’t
covering much, fingers digging into you as he lifted you on to your knees, bringing your breasts against his face. Your dress gathering over his hands, he reached one up to slide the straps of the lingerie inspired dress off your shoulders. He watched as the silk cascaded effortlessly to the crook of your elbows, exposing your bare breasts to him.

He pulled you into him, taking one breast in his mouth, roughly rolling his tongue over your nipple repeatedly. You gasped at the sudden wetness despite expecting it, your fingers tangling themselves against the roots of his hair.

“Seto…shit…yes,” you moaned disjointedly, heart stuttering as it met the pulsation that rippled from where his tongue was touching you. His hands on your hips held you against your hopeless writhing against him. Your head locked over his, your chin digging into his crown.

Perhaps due to the pregnancy causing your nipples to be heightened in sensitivity, even a small swirl of his tongue was that much more arousing to you.

One hand found its way to your other breast, his thumb pressing down on your nipple and rubbing it in circles.

He nipped the nipple his mouth was over suddenly; just enough for you to feel it, and you arched your hips into his chest now than there was one hand less to hold you down. Unknowingly, you released a high pitched moan at the combined sensation of his mouth and his hand against your breasts.

“That’s my girl,” he husked from below you, “honestly it concerned me not being with you this way for nine months.”

His words were jumbled against your ears.

Pulling your head away to watch his mouth sucking your breast only aroused you more. He looked up as if on cue, smirk widening against your nipple as he saw your eyes heavy with lust.

“Enjoying yourself?” he inquired hoarsely, forcing the blush across your cheeks to deepen. He forced you down on to his lap when you didn’t respond. “I asked you a question.” His blue eyes were titillating to you in that moment.

You could feel his erection pressing against the lace of your panties.

You looked at him suggestively before slipping your hand between your two bodies and wrapping your hand around his crotch; cupping him. This successfully elicited a grunt from him, forcing him to grit his teeth as you applied pressure on around it, your eyes never leaving his.

“You’ve grown haven’t you?” he teased, though he allowed it as you continued to play with it, wrapping and unwrapping your fingers around it over and over again. He let out a low, strained chuckle. “How do you still fool people with that innocent image?”

You leaned over towards his ear, running your tongue against the cartilage before nipping teasingly at it.

“I’m only this way for you,” you whispered seductively.

“Good. Stop doing that,” he growled huskily, finally prying your hand away from his crotch, referring to your tongue against his ear, “it reminds me that there’s better ways to employee your mouth.”
With his hand wrapped around your back, he gently threw your back against the sofa cushions, clambering over you, one knee dipping into the seat cushions, the other foot placed on the ground, arms caging you. You watched his blue eyes wild in his state of slight intoxication as he loosened his tie completely throwing it to the ground, never breaking your gaze. He undid the first couple of buttons of his shirt.

You wouldn’t lie, you wanted him desperately. You wanted him inside you; feel him filling you as he came into you, pounding into you over and over again.

“Careful, I can read your eyes like a book,” he laughed darkly.

“I wish you could just take me,” you chuckled faintly, almost absentmindedly in response. He could blame his behaviour on his intoxication. What excuse did you possibly have?

You knew he wanted you too.

“Don’t show that face to anyone else,” he demanded as he bent over you. Your heart quivering in anticipation as his lips hovered over your ear. “Have you had dinner yet?” he inquired in the most disappointingly anti-climactic question ever. The man must have a ridiculous amount of self control.

“We really must be married,” you groaned. “No, I haven’t.”

He pulled away instantly at these words, standing over you.

“Your fridge has nothing but ice cream and Belgian chocolates in it,” he complained.

“My husband doesn’t let me live here,” you offered sarcastically in response, slipping your dress which was serving as a nothing more than a belt around your waist, back on. “Those are probably the only things that haven’t expired for the maids to remove.”

You heard him release a combination of a huff and a groan as he walked towards the kitchen.

“Do you have anything in particular you want to eat?”

“I’m craving pizza.”

“That’s not food, that’s junk,” he dismissed.

“Is not. I want pizza,” you defied, pulling up an app on your phone ordering literally one of everything – or rather five large pizzas – from a local pizzeria. “You’ll see!”

“Why do you remind me of Mokuba?” he sighed in defeat, pouring himself a glass of water from the kitchen.

You walked up beside him, opening the freezer and peering into it.

“Do you want some?” you offered, pulling out a carton of double chocolate ice cream and reaching for a spoon.

“Eat that after dinner,” he ordered, eyes boring into you as you quite plainly ignored him and dug your spoon in, defiantly raising an eyebrow at him as you brought it to your mouth, intentionally drawing out the motion as you pulled the empty spoon from your mouth.

“Do you want some?” you repeated as he watched you, shoving a spoonful in his direction. He leaned down, taking it in his mouth. There was a certain suggestion that gleamed in his eye as he
Pushing his glass away across the counter, he moved to stand behind you, dropping his head against your shoulder. You could sense his weariness in how he leaned against you, though careful not to push you into the counter. He wrapped his hands around your waist, slipping one over your stomach, lightly pressing down on it.

Forced down a little by his weight, you tilted your head up slightly in his direction, though your hair fell like a wall down the side of your face, blocking your view.

You could tell by the way he relaxed into you that he was content, just being there with you and that was enough for you as well.

You swayed lightly on your feet. For the first time in, possibly ever in your relationship, you weren’t presidents of multibillion dollar corporations with obligations and expectations weighing you down, rather, just two people, free of titles and prying eyes, enjoying each other’s company.

You weren’t sure how long passed just standing there that way when your doorbell rang, informing you that your delivery had arrived outside the building.

Walking up to the monitor of your doorbell and pressing the button to allow the video feed to display who was ringing, you saw the delivery boy standing there. You buzzed him in to allow access to the top floor of the building.

You waited a few minutes without a ring at your penthouse suite’s door. You understood that it took a while to reach the fifty second floor, but it seemed to take unusually long, though perhaps you were being impatient. Tired of watching the door, you took the bag you discarded at the foot of the sofa into your bedroom, leaving Seto in the living room flipping through the books on your suspended bookcase against the wall.

From your room you heard the doorbell ringing again and footsteps leading up to open the door.

“Finally, I was beginning to thi –” the words slipped away from you as you reached the middle of the living room.

The man dressed in all black that stood at your door was quite clearly not the delivery boy you had seen minutes earlier.

The barrel of a gun fitted with a silencer was pressed against Seto’s forehead. You couldn’t see your husband’s expression from where you stood.

Your eyes widened in pure horror, heartbeat catching in your throat.

The noise fell mute against your ears but you saw the gun fire.

Human intuition was a scary thing.
Chapter Notes

I'm honestly going to give myself a heart attack. I wrote this overnight since like two in the morning. It is now ten. Excuse the minor spelling and grammar mishaps that my mind drowning in delusion due to lack of sleep is unable to weed out despite how many times I read this piece.

I will admit, not one of favourite chapters though I intended it to be.

I have another idea for a Kaiba fic and it's draining all my creative thought so I am kind of in a desperate scramble for the finish line with this one because I do want to complete this in a way that compliments the rest of the story thus far but I don't know how far I'm going to get. The struggle. Please pray to the fic gods to allow this to be completed because it's not looking very good.

*Edit, if you all are getting tired of this fic as I have seen a few comments concerning that, do let me know and I can shelf this and just start the new one?

* When the reader says from this point on everything is a product of my imagination, the events accounted are all entirely accurate, she's just not sure what is real and what is imagined.

Reflexes springing to life before your mind was able to comprehend what unfolded before you, your knees folded and back curved over in a desperate scramble to avoid the bullet that flew past Seto’s ear and hurtled towards you. While you were relieved and in some distant corner, impressed at Seto’s ability to avoid the bullet so effortlessly with a swift movement of his head, something told you that its intended target had always been you.

From this point on, until whenever, drowning in a state of pandemonium, all accounts you recalled of the event were the disarrayed snippets your disoriented conscious mind managed to salvage. Every single detail was your imagination filling in the gaps in between what little you actually retained.

The thought that you might lose him was what materialized in your mind first. Perhaps more so than losing your own life, losing Seto was infinitely more terrifying.

Your perception glitched, your body folded to the ground as if the bullet had made impact, but your mind failed to register the motion. Your limbs refused to comply with your only conscious thought of needing to reach your gun. You were transfixed.

You couldn’t lose him.

You felt a sharp ache tearing through your lower abdomen.

The stranger at the door must have moved his finger towards the trigger to re-aim his pistol. An eerie ‘click’ sound that you were all too familiar with resounded faintly through the living room.

“I don’t think so!” you heard Seto declare dangerously, in a tone that was frightening even to you.
The back of his hand pushed the pistol away, his other hand shooting up to grip at the barrel as he grappled with the armed man to disarm him of his weapon.

A few rapid, calculated strikes were exchanged between the two. For who you assumed was a trained assassin, much to the alleviation of your fear, your husband’s strength and skill was unmatched by him. Seto’s grip mercilessly crushed the man’s dominant hand, drawing a painful howl from him. Wrestling the gun away from him and throwing it into the living room, Seto delivered a roundhouse kick, his foot connecting with the side of the man’s head, hurling him towards the wall. You heard the vibration that rippled through the walls as his head made contact with the stone.

The gun spun across the floor, down the decorative steps of your living room to where you had pulled yourself against the sofa. Your mind urged your fingers to wrap around the trigger, but they lay limp on the ground, inches away from the metal.

You saw the man stagger on his feet holding his head and Seto spared no time punching him square in the face, the man fell back before he returned it. The punch made contact with Seto’s jaw. You could feel your heart clench as you saw him producing a pocket knife from his pocket.

A few more trained blows were traded with Seto expertly avoiding the knife’s edge as he countered each jab. The two men continued to exchange hits until Seto’s hand succeeded in gripping the man by the back of his head. Sparing no second thoughts, your husband drew the man’s head violently into the wall repeatedly.

Blood seeped out from the impact after a few knocks against the stone.

Picking up the gun at your feet, you shakily rose to your feet, fingers bracing against the tufted fabric as you willed your legs to place themselves one in front of the other, but you could only call out to him as your knees met the cold marble tile again.

He was fine, you told yourself, he was standing in front of you unharmed, but it was no consolation, you mind wouldn’t forget that you were a mere hair’s breadth from losing everything you’ve ever held dear. Surviving, surviving him would have been nothing short of a tragedy, your worst nightmare. You sanity was deteriorating; you were unsure how you had formed your next words.

“Seto stop it,” you yelled, though it left your lips a strained whisper at best. “He’s already gone, you’re killing him!” you cried as he continued to cruelly hammer the man’s head against the wall.

As if awakening from a trance, he released the man, allowing him to collapse limply to the floor. You couldn’t see from where you were, but you imagined the assassin’s blood was seeping into the navy carpet outside. His eyes were unfeeling, pitless abysses which held no remorse or human sentiment.

You saw Seto retrieve his phone almost mechanically from the pocket of his slacks, dialling someone.

“Where have you morons been? Is this how you do your job? I better have you here in the next – ”

His eyes must have drifted over to you writhing in agony at the foot of your sofa. Had your body fooled itself into believing you were injured or was the tightness knotting in your abdomen reality?

His phone disappearing from his hand, the next moment afforded you a view of his blue eyes centimetres away from you. His hand held up your head, keeping your hair brushed away from
your eyes contorting in pain. He called your name, a tone of alarm threatening his composure.

“We need to go to the hospital,” he urged.

“I’m fine, I’m fine,” you assured, dismissing his concerns. You had meant to offer him a smile, though you were almost positive your lips had twisted awkwardly into a grimace instead.

It was a bizarre sensation, as if you were experiencing the scene before you in slow motion. In simple terms, you were lagging, mind processing thoughts and producing an output at a pace that was seconds behind reality.

He picked you up, forcing you to wrap your legs around his waist from his side, where his right arm held you. Your arms hooked around his neck, your face falling into his neck, finding trying to find comfort in the feeling of your bare skin against his.

Then your selfish thoughts crept in, despite how close you held him, the thought of what could have happened if Seto wasn’t home that night chilled the blood in your veins.

“I thought I lost you,” you returned his early words back to him in a muffled whisper against the skin of his neck.

“It’s going to take more than one of those goons with a gun to take me.” Even in his somewhat intoxicated state, he was still thoroughly composed, his nerves of steel untouched.

You woke up sometime past one in the morning to voices in your living room. From where you lay on your bed, you called Seto’s name in a panic, though in hindsight, you probably should have investigated the situation before making your presence known. In your sleep deprived state however, your survival instincts were dull.

Not hearing a response should have compelled you to be more cautious, instead with increased agitation, you called out again.

He appeared in the doorway, turning on the lights, drowning out the glow of the table lamps in the brilliance of the decorative crystal light structure which cascaded from the ceiling.

“You’re awake,” he observed. You didn’t know when sleep had found you, or what your last memory was prior to it.

You noticed the darkness colouring under his eyes, fatigue evidently plaguing his features, his hair wild over his drained complexion. You could faintly see exhaustion seeping into his blue orbs, ignoring his defiance.

“Who’s here?”

“My men. Everything has been taken care of, the police just left. You have nothing to worry about.”

Those words reached you as completed obligations and protocol, which while alleviated the tedious irritation of having to move through the motions of the aftermath; your heart remained deeply disturbed. His words were of no comfort to your distraught state of being.

They had gotten so unfathomably close.

Was he no longer your cure?

You wouldn’t have known your eyes frosting over in an enlarged state, features crinkling
uncomfortably, but one glance at your face read pure fear.

“I’m here,” those familiar words, spoken by the familiar voice enveloped you with his embrace as he sat on the edge of the bed. You suspected that crying would relieve you of some of the suffocation, but you were too transfixed in your state of mortification to even cry. You felt him rubbing his hand up and down your back and to a very small extent; it felt as if this motion was wearing away tension.

“I don’t know what I would do without you,” you whispered, burying your face against what little bare skin revealed itself to you from under his partially unbuttoned dress shirt. A few months ago, you would have rather impaled yourself than admit that you would depend on anyone besides yourself.

“Why waste your time thinking about things you’ll never need to concern yourself with, it’s not like I’m going anywhere.”

His arrogance was surprisingly quite welcome in that moment. Your hands clutched the fabric of the back of his shirt, forcefully pushing yourself into him.

“I think you’ve buried yourself as far as you can,” he noted sarcastically as you tried to burrow yourself further.

You heard a knock at the door followed by a voice addressing Seto. You expected him to let you go, but he merely turned his head in the man’s direction.

“Err, pardon the interruption Mr. Kaiba, but we’ve secured the building and the er, incident at the front door has been cleaned,” he informed, with awkwardness which translated into a tone of uncertainty – likely at being in the presence of his usually cold and unfeeling boss who infamously inspired terror, embracing his lover. Apparently this was more terrifying.

“Dismissed,” Seto replied roughly. “I ordered food again,” he informed you upon hearing the front door of your penthouse closing.

“Real food?” you found it in yourself to ridicule his earlier insult.

“You said you wanted pizza,” he replied plainly while still holding you.

“You really are the best husband ever,” you mumbled.

“Do you have another?”

This was why you couldn’t have nice things in this relationship. His exceptional talent for injecting stale doses of reality into every moment robbed you of all of it.

…

Ironically, in the midst of this chaos, huddled up to your husband on the sofa, watching some old American baking show from the early two thousands which he seemed to tolerate for your sake – though he seemed to pay no attention to it – while eating pizza was the most normal night you’ve shared in your relationship.
You didn’t have suitable attire to offer for Seto to change into for the night, so he was forced to sleep in his briefs, and while you had no complaints, you did feel mildly apologetic.

“Come here,” Seto ordered, seeing you blankly stare up at the ceiling after he joined you under the sheets later than night – or rather later that morning, considering it was well past three.

“I can’t sleep, I don’t think I can sleep,” you confessed. You were at your most vulnerable and it was painfully obvious, at least to your husband.

“Come here,” he repeated, “you’ll fall asleep fine.”

You felt his arm slip under you, gently curling you into his bare body. He was right, you did sleep fine.

…

Of all that you were able to afford, your life didn’t afford you the luxury of taking personal days to recover from mortally traumatic events. You were forced to accept them as water under the bridge as the rest of your life continued to rapidly course forward. Success waited for no one.

…

“Stress weakens the immune system, more severely during pregnancy. Stress in general has the ability to cause physical pain. Tension headaches, backaches, unexplained muscle aches and spasms, even chest pain are all signs of extreme stress. These sensations are heightened during pregnancy. Your pregnancy is fine as of right now, but your stress will threaten that,” your obstetrician/gynecologist warned you the next morning at the hospital following some tests.

You were there at Seto’s incessant urging to confirm that the pregnancy wasn’t affected from the trauma of last night’s incident, speaking to the physician he had personally appointed.

“I understand your career is extremely demanding but is there something particular placing stress on you?” You held in your impulse to laugh wryly. “How’s your relationship with your husband?”

“It’s fine, I guess,” you responded vaguely as you shrugged.

“He’s not aggressive or neglectful? Is how he is reacting to this pregnancy bringing on unnecessary stress?”

Seto was a lot of things and you didn’t think he was a ball of yarn she could unravel within the course of your twenty minute appointment. He was such an enigma that you wondered if you would be able to solve him in your lifetime.

“He’s fine. Look, I hate to be rude, but I have a meeting I need to be at in the next fifteen minutes, so if you’ve confirmed that everything is as it should be, do you mind if I leave?”

“Everything is as it should be, but even a small amount of added stress will push your body over the edge, keep that in mind,” she offered you as parting words.
The unexpected appointment first thing in the morning derailed your entire day, pushing you to be late for one schedule after the other like an unfortunate set of falling dominos. While you were aware he had your best interests in mind, his insistence had forced you in to an unfortunate situation you were certain he would have the nerve to criticize severely.

Late morning traffic and wardrobe changes made it so that you were a fair twenty minutes late to your interview with a major Tokyo broadcasting station that had sent a team to Domino specifically to meet with you. Your tardiness was unprofessional and more so discourteous, thus formality had caused you to stay longer than initially scheduled on your part, forcing you to compensate with the time you had set aside to change for your next meeting.

Your next schedule was a follow up to the previous gaming convention meeting you had attended and would again be joined by the presidents of all the major gaming corporations. It was the second in a series of three meetings in preparation for the largest summer gaming and technology convention held in Domino in a few months.

You were already on the verge of being late and though dressed more appropriately for a high fashion magazine editorial than a formal business setting, time wouldn’t allow you to change. The black lace crop top which bordered on being a bralette and low rise mini skirt which bared your midriff was certainly an unfortunate choice of clothing to attend a gaming industry meeting in, even with your light blue blazer draped over your shoulders, especially when recalling the events of the last one.

The untied ribbons of the deconstructed blazer – in the sense that it was more feminine and asymmetrical than your average office blazer – flew about your waist as you rushed through the halls of the building, almost tripping over the ankle ribbon of your peep-toe, black lace ankle boots that had come undone.

Being the last to join the meeting was never helpful in attempting to distract from being dressed like you were ready to perform at Tokyo dorm as a part of a girl group.

You unintentionally caught a pair of blue eyes glaring at you, inspiring in your mind the quote, ‘if looks could kill.’

As discreetly as your heels allowed, you made your way to sit next to your husband, anticipating the hell he would surely raise on this issue later on.

A wave of hushed whispers swept across the room, though none of it was enough to unsettle you the way the brazen and lecherous stares did when they found their way over your exposed skin.

“What the hell are you wearing,” Seto hissed from besides you, draping his suit jacket – which could serve you as a dress – over you. “What possessed you to think this was appropriate here.”

“You forcing me to see the ob. gyn. possessed me,” you hissed back equally aggressively, perhaps a little too loudly. “It went well, I’m fine, thank you for asking,” you added snidely.

“Watch your words,” he warned, fingers digging into your bare thigh as if to punctuate his point, “and I’m aware, I already received all the reports.”
Right, of course, why had you expected any less a form of meticulousness from the man?

There was something deeply disturbing morally, and indescribably perverted about men in their forties and fifties ogling at a young woman at the turn of her twenties, young enough to be their daughter.

It was so disturbing and distracting in fact that it was currently occupying all of your husband’s attention. He began to propose something – which in more honest terms meant he was brutally tearing down another corporation’s idea down to dirt – before interrupting himself.

“What exactly is it that you gentlemen are so intently looking at?” he suddenly bellowed, voice echoing off the walls. He placed a hand possessively over your shoulder from where he stood next to you, burying his fingers so deep into his suit jacket that you slightly winced.

The stares immediately fell away from you, silence gripping the room for a long moment before the collective noise of throats being cleared in an uncomfortable and contrived manner drowned the room.

You took this opportunity to bring your hand up to the one clutching you in an attempt to loosen his fingers.

The meeting continued in a way that was much more comfortable to you – it helped that there was a pair of blue eyes shooting laser beams at anyone who dared to look in your general direction next to you, and the fear of surely disintegrating into dust after merely making eye contact kept all the lewd stares at bay.

The meeting concluded eventually and the room exploded into a blur of simultaneous conversation and disorderly movement. The executives began to pour out of the room gradually.

“Did… the ob.gyn. mention anything concerning?” Seto asked uncertainly from your side as you stood up, picking up your tablet to place it in your bag.

“You said you received the report,” you replied, quite plainly displaying your irritation towards his earlier words.

“Outside the reports,” he grit his teeth. You could tell he was attempting to remedy his earlier dismissal but you had decided to be difficult.

“No, not particularly.” You tone was sombre.

“Be that way,” he finally snapped.

You didn’t know what it was in you that forced you to constantly steer the relationship in a direction where you forced the both of you to be constantly running towards the edge of a cliff. Perhaps it was the fact that a relationship required at least one compliant participant and yours lacked that.

“I heard the government offered to fund your discontinued AI project,” the president of whose corporation name eluded you in that moment, accompanied by several other older gentleman unexpectedly inquired from behind you.

You understood your board had been talking, despite strict orders not to, potentially not to this particular man directly, but to someone in this room.

You also comprehended why this would be a topic of interest. Kaiba Corporation was renowned
for being at the forefront of the gaming and technological industry, with an influence so overwhelming and widespread that it could easily challenge that of not only the national government, but also many international governments, this much was common knowledge. So it was understandable why it gripped the intrigue of these men, curious as to why the government had reached out to Kodama – though a close second – instead of Kaiba Corp.

There was no sense in concealing the offer; it would only stand to raise further suspicions.

“Yes, though the project was not discontinued due to a lack of funds.”

“Why did you refuse?” He persisted, a little more aggressively, contrary to his crooked grin.

“I have no intention of allowing my corporation to become a weapon in the government’s defense portfolio,” you explained.

It was the next inquiry by a balding man that had just joined the conversation that unsettled you.

“Not interested in being given a stake in the government’s defense sector, so you’re confirming that your AI is capable of warfare?”

Quite honestly, you’ve never looked into the specifics of what your AI was developed to accomplish. The field of study was one that troubled you morally and therefore you had terminated it.

“I never suggested that the technology specifically could serve such a purpose, merely that I did not wish to be involved and used as a tool in defense endeavours, it’s interesting that of my response, that detail would draw your attention.”

By now, a large group of businessmen had amassed around you and your husband, who had reserved himself to merely observing the scene around him.

“Did you not consider that it could have aided a different portfolio?” Another probed.

“Such as?” you inquired flatly. No one in this room remotely contemplated such ridiculous a possibility.

“Health? Space exploration?”

“Possibly.” The nature of the proposal suggested otherwise and any gaming corporation president who possessed an ounce of competence would know exactly what purpose the government would utilize AI for – without one glance at the aforementioned proposal. While the possibilities stated were plausible, they were highly unlikely and anyone who so much as entertained the alternatives were either intentionally being misleading in an attempt to steal answers or warrisomely idiotic. Simply, you didn’t need to specify the portfolio for the men in this room to know exactly what sector your company would be developing technology for. The instant the government came to be involved, it was obvious; they currently only had a single purpose. Therefore, hearing it specifically mentioned shouldn’t raise any additional curiosity. It was a trick question. “I still have no intention of brushing shoulders with the government. If that is all gentlemen?”

It was a trick question. Except, you didn’t know what they intended to do with your answer, more importantly, who in this room was actively seeking that answer.

Their inquisitive questions seemed to all fade away at you firmly declaring your will to depart, though Seto Kaiba slipping his hand through yours and motioning to walk out wordlessly couldn’t have impeded your intentions. You picked up your bag as you were pulled forward behind Seto
through the crowd of men he had forcefully parted.

You felt a sensation of something slipping into your skirt pocket as you walked through, only having the leisure to confirm your suspicions as you climbed into the passenger seat of Seto’s car – who quite aggressively demanded that he drive you home to change.

Cautiously unfolding a piece of paper wedged into your pocket, you read its neatly sprawled contents, the note reminiscent of a fortune cookie slip.

“Call off your two girl scouts. You’ve dug too deep. Don’t drag them to death row with you.”

Your first instinct was to crumple it and bury it back in your skirt pocket, swiftly hiding it from your husband as he took his place at the driver’s seat.
His Fairy

Chapter Notes

For the concept behind the performance in this chapter, literally go watch any Gfriend song, namely Love Whisper, Glass Bead, Navillera, Me Gustas Tu, and you’ll get the idea. Just a very young and very pure image. I based this on Love Whisper and One Half primarily so go watch that if you want to imagine what it would look like lol and I may or may not be pushing it a little more than I was planning due to a comment from PandaMuse a few chapters ago.

I also noticed KaiyaStrife, Sincerely_KT and BeautifulMonsters were taking interest in it so here I went overboard with making Kaiba uncomfortable for no reason besides your laughing - possibly cringing, thus the title - pleasure. It also in a away I suppose serves to sharply contrast media portrayal against actual personality.

*Enjoy the fluff before something actually tragic happens in this story unlike the weak bs I've been playing at.*

This second update is basically dedicated to everyone up there, sakuchwan, Crysa, Scarletbelle87, Erindevlin4u and the rest of the comment section gang. Also to anyone that has followed the story thus far, thank you for staying with it, even all of you silent readers :)

“You never mentioned the government offering funding for your AI project to be rebooted,” Seto inquired accusingly as he drove, though his overall tone remained indifferent.

That was a not so minor detail that had unfortunately slipped your mind. The offer was made a few days following the hacking incident and promptly refused on your end. The construction of the proposal’s offer in its wording has bothered you ever since in that it seemed as if it was a response to a request for funding rather than an initial proposition for a partnership. There was definitely something you were missing in this yourself.

While the death threat was certainly burning a hole in your pocket, what was currently drowning your attention was how a president of no consequence was aware of information that Seto Kaiba seemed to be uninformed of, though the way he reserved himself from asking questions – especially given his personality which demanded to know every detail about virtually everything – strongly suggested the idea that there was nothing he felt the need to inquire after as he was already entirely aware of all that had transpired.

You laid your hand over his thigh as you leaned forward in your seat. You watched him immediately stiffen in response, oblivious to how your current attire was affecting him; you thought this response strange and incomprehensible.

“You’re keeping tabs on me.” It was a statement, a vague one.

“Of course I am, your guards report to me. How do you think I keep my sanity when you run away from home like a petulant child?”
That answered a question you were not particularly looking for the answer for.

“Kodama. You’re keeping tabs on my company, even as you insist you stay away from my business due it being of no concern to you.”

It didn’t particularly bother you that he did; in fact there was a certain sense of security associated with it. He never kept Kaiba Corp. information confidential. The detail that wouldn’t sit right with you was that he hadn’t felt the need to divulge that information to you.

He wouldn’t answer.

“Seto.”

“I’m aware that an offer was made and subsequently refused.”

“And you thought it unimportant to tell me?”

“As unimportant as you considered the detail,” he retorted flatly.

“It’s my company! I’m under no obligation to tell you anything concerning its operations and dealings, on the other hand, you keeping tabs on me – the extent of your monitoring – that is a detail which is owed to me!” Your nails unwittingly dug into his thigh almost as if re-enacting the motions of his fingers against your thigh earlier.

He lowered his left hand over yours from its place on the steering wheel, forcefully plucking your fingers away as he continued to concentrate on the road.

“You’re being awfully violent as of late,” he remarked in annoyance. “Your pregnancy is concerning enough to you, and there are many other factors causing strain on this marriage, I don’t think it is of any significance how I choose to monitor your safety.”

In his mind, the end always justified the means.

You would allow it. You had enough enemies without turning your husband into one of them. You almost allowed yourself to tell him about the note in your pocket. Your thought process was that if he had you under such extensive surveillance, he was more than likely aware of your agents and had he possessed the intention to stop you, he would have done so already, except, if he knew these ‘extensions’ of yours were funneling danger your way, he would certainly not allow it and this thought forced you to bury the further.

“Do whatever you want. Take over the company while you’re at it too.”

The last sentence was an unneeded accentuation to that statement.

“Your hormones are going to drive me mad,” he growled bitterly.

“You in all your testosterone glory drive me mad on the daily and unfortunately that doesn’t have a nine month expiration date.”

He groaned your name in utter frustration, not amused by your jab in the least bit.
“You were wise in not involving yourself in the weapons industry,” Seto stated leaning over your ear from behind you in bed that night.

“I think the weapons industry is coming to involve itself with me,” you muttered absentmindedly.

This didn’t seem to gain his attention the way you had imagined when you cringed internally after the words had slipped from you. He seemed indifferent yet again.

“You’re overthinking it. Go to sleep,” he finally declared after a few moments of looming over your side in silence.

You felt him spoon himself against you as he urged you to drift into the realm of sleep.

…

Following the confirmation that Miyuki was indeed being followed, the need to exchange information via a locker grew unnecessary. You had her retrieve everything she had placed in the locker – which to your surprise wasn’t broken into – and bring it to your office.

Sifting through the dated photographs of what was exchanged, both in terms of the contents of the locker as well as evidence of who was involved, alone with Miyuki’s journals noting additional detailing to certain conversations overheard; many that were supported by voice recordings – which while not admissible in a court of low – were enough to soundly confirm the presence conflicts of interest, bribery and corruption.

This cemented the involvement of Uchimura Hyobe, director of Human Resources with Egusa Sotatsu, former board director of Kodama and several other former members, and in an interesting development, a man you recognized to be a present director of Kaiba Corp. along with the vice president of Wakaetsu Industries, who also oversaw operations of a gaming corporation that had been in attendance of yesterday’s meeting.

Not only had you found your rat, you had also in a delightful accident discovered a rat from your husband’s corporation and as if that wasn’t enough excitement for one morning, you were afforded the opportunity to realize which wanker had slipped the death threat into your pocket the day before.

You asked your secretary to compile you a list of all the companies that had attended yesterday’s meeting, specifically listing who – president, vice-president or other executive – had represented each. You would determine their affiliations through your own investigative capabilities. For now, you just needed to pin the individual who had been present in place of the aforementioned vice-president, unless he had attended himself.

You were inspired by violent sentiments to absolutely destroy this gaming company, but the understanding that touching a corporation that was more or less a subsidiary of Wakaetsu Industries would convey nothing short of a declaration of war against the conglomerate themselves, forced you to reserve your anger for such a time you were fully knowledgeable about the enemy you were facing.

Picking up the key to locker 244 at Silver Lake Golfing, you were reminded of how you regarded golfing.
You’ve always hated golf, you thought to yourself, so you would go play a round of the tedious sport. It wasn’t a sensible train of thought even in your mind, though perhaps spending time within the vicinity of a golf club would force you to grow an appreciation for the sport. Not likely but desperate times called for equal or possibly more brutal measures and at the very least, country club attire was beyond posh.

More importantly, it would provide you first hand confirmation of what was transpiring within the confines of that establishment. While your suspicions on Miyuki were currently put to rest, you wouldn’t blindly ride into war with her word and information alone. You would witness the shady dealings yourself, potentially gather more extensive detail as you plot the downfall of an empire that was threatening yours.

…

That afternoon found you performing at a spring special of a weekly music show of Japan’s most prominent broadcasting station, with a Korean girl group that was extremely popular across Asia right now.

The thought process was that you were young and adorable, and able to match their level of fame, along with the sickeningly sweet and innocent concept of the group to create a performance that would be memorable for both the group and the public.

You were initially trained to be an idol in your early teenage years before you left the group Kurosawa had intended for you to be in, months before debut and pursued acting full-time as you had already amassed a lot of interest through the dramas you had appeared in over the course of your trainee years.

The group you would have debuted with when you were fifteen were still incredibly popular and still managed by you and your agency.

As such, this performance was evoking nostalgia for your early years in the industry. It was a bittersweet reminder of what could have been.

The white lace dress with a skirt that you could only describe as a tasteful tutu, paired with socks peeking under white, platform trainers was a familiar aesthetic to you. Whether you thoroughly enjoyed looking like that, you weren’t entirely certain. What you were more concerned about though was the floral headband that was loosely placed over your waved hair.

The performance involved a series of dynamic dance movements and you feared the decorative accessory flying off into the crowd and impaling someone’s eyeball.

As demanding as the dance was however, your gynecologist had deemed it safe for you to proceed with it.

Stepping on to the stage, having only practiced the dance a handful of times and only once this morning with the actual group, all you had learnt as a trainee years ago was failing you, theories forgotten by the nervousness and yet as the melody fell over your ears, your muscle memory somehow gracefully carried you through.

The concept was untainted innocence, with both the songs reminiscing the beginning of a young girl’s first love and all the memories she cherished of her boyfriend. It was pure, innocent, cute and
lovely; basically all the things that would make your husband’s skin crawl and blood curdle.

It was comforting though that you weren’t the oldest among the members, wedged somewhere into the middle of the range, allowing you to feel as if you belonged with them in that moment.

The stage was obviously well received by the fans; the fan chants overwhelming across the outdoor pavilion and you were touched by them for having included your name in their chants and cheers.

Leaving the stage, you could never have predicted who you were greeted by backstage.

Considering the repulsed scowl that was currently plaguing his face, you were surprised he had even entertained the thought of bringing himself to the venue.

Fighting the grin spreading over your lips, you approached the man in the grey suit and light blue dress shirt, navy tie perfectly drawing out the colour of his eyes. You couldn’t help but notice the watch you had bought him peeking under the sleeve of his suit jacket.

He lifted his eyes up from his phone disinterestedly at the sound of approaching footsteps, before realizing it was you.

“Fuck, I really forget how young you are,” he cursed, expression distorting almost uncomfortably as he plucked the headband from your hair as if it disgusted him. “You look like you could be in high school.”

“It has barely been three years since I graduated,” you pointed out. A sudden reminder of the substantial age difference which persisted between the two of you hung awkwardly in the air, clearly plunging the twenty nine year old into discomfort.

“For fuck’s sake,” he muttered again.

“Did you like the performance?” You asked distracting from it.

“It gave me diabetes,” he spat. “Did you have to smile like that? Seeing you dressed and acting like that, it’s no wonder people mistake you for being innocent. You have the entire nation fooled. Change into something else, I don’t even want to touch you when you look that sickly sweet.”

You knew he was lying through his teeth since this was how you dressed, or at least similarly, ninety percent of the time in the public eye, so for him to have fallen for you, this is the image he must have fallen for.

“You don’t think I look pretty?” you asked mockingly in a voice that could possibly give him a cavity. He leaned into you, instead of away like you had expected.

“I think you look better with your clothes on the floor, your hands in my hair, sweating and calling my name,” he whispered.

You felt your heart shudder in your chest. You gasped as if scandalized.

“Shame on you, that’s not something you tell an innocent girl.”

He pulled you into him smirking.

“There’s nothing innocent about you,” he purred darkly.

“You should do it,” you abruptly declared, mirroring his smirk, referring to his earlier fantasy.
“That’s what I like to hear. Now change out of this ridiculous tooth fairy outfit and put on something worth me tearing off of your body.”
Chapter Notes

Thank you for all the lovely comments! I do realize I’m running behind on replies and I am very sorry, but I will get to all of them as always, hopefully after posting this.

*Edit: I think I got to all of them. :)

So the second to last scene starts off in the reader’s P.O.V before it vaguely becomes Seto’s. It doesn’t involve a lot of detail but just wanted to inform you that there is a shift in there without warning.

Snatching the headband hanging loosely from his fingers, you placed it over your hair. You motioned to walk away when his hand wrapped around your wrist, pulling you back, and pinning you against the wall.

You were standing along a tall, discoloured white wall, around the corner from the stage of the outdoor stadium. You weren’t secluded. A temporary, wooden wall stood erected parallel to the main wall. It was like a long hallway, with the sun above you.

He didn’t give you time to react, under the short shadow the wall behind you casted, he pressed his body against you, crushing his lips against yours.

“What are you doing?” you gasped, just touching his lips, “anyone could walk by.”

“You know how impatient I am,” he declared, almost panting. His hands found your waist where the tulle of your dress flared.

The corner of your eye as he leaned into your lips again caught an awkwardly positioned shadow. The cypress plants placed in that corner couldn’t have casted such a disproportionately long shadow.

There was someone there.

“Seto’s someone’s watching us,” you protested, jerking your head back.

“You’re being paranoid,” he dismissed as he tilted his head for a better angle, taking your lips in his roughly.

…

“I asked you to change out of it, not change into a street appropriate variation,” he spat as he looked you over when you found him again after changing. You noticed he was on the phone with someone before you joined him.
The man needed to realize that just because it was a dress and it was white; it didn’t make the two the same. Far from each other in fact, this dress was slinky and hugged your waist, it overlapped at the chest in a moderately deep ‘v’ and then again as it draped down the center, reflecting the neckline over your thighs before the sides fell over your calves. It was airy and flowing.

“It’s a Chloe dress, let it be,” you contested.

“Whatever,” he scoffed dismissively. “Am I supposed to know what that means?”

You bit you bottom lip in an attempt to stop your next choice of words from spilling out.

He snaked an arm around your waist, pulling you against his hip, as he led you out of the venue.

“You came here in your limo? Excessive much?” you inquired, as you slipped in.

Was he trying to make a point with his presence or was he dropping by unexpectedly on his way somewhere else? The answer as it turned out, was both.

Closing the door behind him, he leaned into you before his phone rang again.

He answered, displeasure evident in his manner, before placing a hand over it and turning to you.

“I need to get back to work sooner than I expected, where do you need to be?”

“My company.”

“Which one?”

“My agency building.”

He relayed this to the driver and remained on the phone for the rest of the drive. Which as disappointing as it was, you’ve grown used to.

…

Later that afternoon, you relieved Miyuki of her duties. For an internal audit department’s employee, the situation was stretching far beyond what the scope of what she was trained for.

You had recently brought yourself to be quite conscious of who – at least who you gathered – were and where the guards posted by your husband were at all times. Not for the sake of your safety under attack, but rather, you needed to evade them to successfully spy on your little friends at the golf club.

Having Ayumi posted on the tails of the guards for safe measure, you slipped out the back entrance of your building, tactfully avoiding the one car black parked there.

Silver Lake golf club was indeed a grand establishment, as to be expected from a place frequented by your board members.

You had been prudent in doing your research to make sure that the club’s management didn’t have any close personal relationships with any of your targets. That being said, there were always connections that escaped the naked eye so you remained cautious.
You would have played a round, except you hated the damned sport and more justifiably, word of your presence floating around would only place you in danger, so you made yourself as scarce as possible.

You reserved yourself at first to drinking a cup of tea in the lounge area. At this time of day, the chances of any of your board members, current or former, or any of your other targets being present were low. They would also, given your appearance on stage earlier that afternoon, assume that you were occupied with other activities, elsewhere, meaning even if you were to be spotted by their men, they would more likely dismiss it before actively investigating it.

After confirming that no unwanted guests were present, you discreetly slipped into the surveillance room.

First pretending to the young man present, who happened to be a huge fan of yours, that you were here looking for a necklace your friend had dropped on her last visit, you convinced him to step outside the room for a few minutes. You may have slipped an envelope filled with 10,000 yen notes into his pocket.

The security software was fairly simple, almost exact to the one Kodama utilized, so you managed to make easy work scanning through the dates Miyuki had noted the bribes and such were placed and exchanged, confirming those meetings did indeed occur, before quickly copying the data on to your device. You were also careful to erase any records of the files being transferred, all the while remaining acutely perceptive of the door. The last thing you needed was someone bypassing your guard boy and walking in.

You also spared a moment to watch Miyuki’s movements to confirm she wasn’t associating herself with the enemy in a way that was concerning or could compromise your trust in her. It wouldn’t give you a thorough confirmation, though if there were red flags, you would catch them. So far however, there appeared to be none. Taking one last second to delete all the footage of your visit that afternoon, you wiped down the keyboard with the edge of your mini golf skirt to ensure no fingerprints were left behind.

You set up the cameras to only start recording the exit route ten minutes from now. The boy you had paid off could easily talk but besides him, if you slipped out stealthily enough, there won’t be any record of you ever coming here.

Walking out the lobby, which to you was a confused fusion of rustic and futuristic, you brushed shoulders with a man dressed in a black suit you didn’t recognize from all the analysis you had done on your –known – enemies, or the faces you memorized to be cautious of. Under your pulled forward golf cap, you spared a glance his way but made nothing of it, and he seemed to do the same.

Even if he was someone you should have avoided, unfortunately your money didn’t stretch far enough to turn back the hands of time.

…

Waking up in a pool of your own sweat on your husband’s chest was becoming habit. The room was cold, which meant the air conditioner was running, perhaps the sheets were becoming too heavy as summer approached.
Your nightgown was damp all over and you knew why Seto’s shirt was probably somewhere on the floor.

Your fingers tightened around something, most likely your husband’s back they were wrapped around, as your body followed your mind to wake up.

‘It’s madness to love someone this much,’ you thought.

You felt his chest vibrate, as it does when one smothers a laugh. You cautiously lifted your head, chin resting on his chest to look at his face. His blue eyes were open, peering down at you, the hand not wrapped around you from under, folded over his fringe.

“There’s worse ways to wake up than hearing your wife declare she loves you,” he stated smugly.

You were thinking out loud. Lovely.

Cursing yourself silently, you laid your head back down. The last thing the man needed was for you to trip his ego.

You pulled your sheets away from you, unable to tolerate the clammy feeling any longer.

“My company will be issuing a statement regarding the marriage today.”

You should have seen that one coming.

“Seto –”

You weren’t about to object, you had intended to offer a slight alteration to his suggestion.

“What are your alternatives?” he interjected aggressively, “Have this child appear to be born illegitimately, or do you plan to keep our child a secret too?”

With your combined power, it wouldn’t be impossibility, though that was a very twisted and unwelcome thought.

“You’re been unnecessarily harsh!”

“No, I’m not. I’m thinking about this family, you’re not. I’m thinking about you and your stupid title. What would the country think if their so called fairy fell pregnant with her boyfriend’s child? I realized I contradict your image, I realize the media finds our relationship appalling at times but I’m the only husband you got. And at some point you won’t be able to hide this. So I’m taking care of it before it becomes an issue! At least one of us needs to think about this child before themselves, and I guess that’s going to be me.”

You couldn’t be sure what had crawled up his arse and died to make him this aggressive, possibly he was projecting his exasperations from your last discussion on this matter on to this conversation without you even offering your thoughts.

Either way, if he was unwilling to listen, you weren’t dealing with this so early in the morning, so you pulled yourself away from him, heading into the bathroom.

The issue was never brought up for the rest of the morning.

…
Walking up to your office, you find the head of your PR department standing with your secretary. The expressions over their faces immediately warned you of impending disaster, or rather a storm that was already brewing that you were unaware of.

Nagano, the head of PR, wordlessly handed you her tablet, open to an article.

You raised your eyebrow stoically as you accepted the device.

The article, you assumed one of many like it, claimed to ‘expose,’ the promiscuity of the Nation’s Fairy. This title was going to be the death of you.

Apparently you had been overtly affectionate in public with your billionaire tycoon boyfriend, and while he was Japan’s most eligible bachelor, many fans now felt he was negatively influencing your image and to an extent, corrupting your propriety.

There was also his army of fans coming for you all over again since the dating rumours were confirmed.

You hadn’t realized holding each other in public was a crime. And apparently it wasn’t, it was the aggressive make out session against the wall that was receiving public disproval. You knew you had seen correctly when you thought there were reporters lurking. Your intuition was never wrong.

Seto Kaiba was too precise and calculating to have allowed a slip up of this scale or a slip up in general. This was intentional. The media wouldn’t be talking about him if he didn’t want them to be. He had appeared there yesterday with an agenda. Each gesture, motion, it was all precisely premeditated with the sole motive of creating this exact outcome.

“That termite!” Yes, this was the best your brain could salvage for an insult from your mind going into overdrive to find a solution from this mess. “That conniving, blue eyed son of a bitch!” you raged, throwing the door open to your office.

For the second time in twenty four hours, he had you up against a wall again.

The ringing of the phone on your desk aroused irritation and exasperation. You didn’t need to see the caller ID to know exactly who was calling.

“You’re one manipulative bastard,” you spoke into the receiver with the steadiest voice you could manage.

“Glad to see we’re on the same page. Now that our relationship is an issue in the media,” he emphasized the ‘is,’ as if to imply the scandal of pubic affection was a natural occurrence or unfortunate mistake, “Kaiba Corp. will issue the marriage press release in an hour. Do as you please with that information.” His tone suggested he was speaking to a corporate rival than his wife.

There goes your trust straight to hell.

The initial response that materialized in your mind was ‘I hope you choke,’ but the sheer lack of grace and tact in those words made you discard it immediately after.

“You’re really something else.”

“Put your ring on,” he ordered gruffly before disconnecting the line.
Two could play at this game.

“Release a statement announcing my engagement to Seto Kaiba, and get it to the press before Kaiba Corp.” you ordered your director of PR as you dialled her extension. “You have half an hour to have it released. Get Nagano and her team to assist you if you must.”

An engagement announcement would be a softer blow than marriage, and you would then find a more tactful, common ground with your husband to announce a wedding rather than a marriage that appeared stiff and arranged.

In your mind, hastening the course of action and skipping ahead to a sudden wedding announcement would raise more suspicion. In your mind, a gradual escalation would serve you better.

All the while, you comprehended that you didn’t have that kind of time, but you didn’t think your husband understood the degree of sensitivity matters such as this required.

…

For once since you married the tyrant – and you call him that with utmost endearment – things were working in your favour instead of his.

The engagement announcement went live ahead of Kaiba Corp.’s press release, overshadowing the scandal in a positive light, and effectively closing the space for a marriage announcement against the public opinion you had harboured.

Fifteen minutes must have passed before your husband came storming through your office doors.

You sat at your desk, perfectly poised, a victorious smile reigning over your lips, severely contrasting his dangerously narrowed eyes.

Leaning over on your propped elbows, you were sure to hold the engagement ring on your finger in plain sight.

“You’re being a child! Do you realize what you have done? You’re playing with time we don’t have!”

“And you’re being a man, overlooking the sensitivity of the subject,” you shot back without faltering.

“We don’t have the time for ridiculous notions like sensitivity!” he roared.

“You make time for everything you need,” you declared in defiance.

You were quite confident in your ability to walk this tightrope without faltering. You knew your influence and you knew your body, more importantly, you knew your husband’s influence.

When he was in a better mood, you would suggest holding a small ceremony for the sake of formality, within the next month or so before announcing the marriage.

“What are you playing at?” he demanded to know, narrowing his eyes further.
“I don’t think you’re in the –” you were interrupted by Seto’s phone ringing.

“Kaiba,” he answered in the most irate voice you’ve heard from him a while.

If anything, you were more terrified of playing with the fire storm that was your husband than the constraints of time. You could buy time with your money to some extent, but all the money in the world couldn’t control your husband, mostly because he possessed basically all of it.

“We’ll talk at home!” he declared before stalking out in the same dramatic fashion he had walked in.

…

Your field trip to the golf course and unofficial investigating had severely cut into your work, so while you intended to leave the office two hours ago, it looked like the next morning would find you glued to your seat, engrossed in your paperwork.

You were sifting through proposals for an upcoming audition project when an eerie feeling enveloped you. It was as if a cold, invisible blanket had suddenly fallen over you. You looked up absentmindedly over your dimly lit office while your mind processed some clauses of a contract and unexpectedly, a chill overcame you, your skin prickled with goosebumps.

Human intuition was a frightening thing. It was inexplicable, unpredictable and in day to day language, what we call ‘a hunch,’ or a ‘gut feeling,’ occurred without a distinguishable pattern, void of rhyme or reason. They eluded the human consciousness and yet in some form they were omnipresent. Free of the constraints of science, they were nothing more than delusion and paranoia and yet to you in that moment, terrifying.

Your fingers instinctively wrapped around the gun you had kept in your breast pocket that entire day, slowly rising from your chair as if in a trance. Your rationality urged you to overcome your superstitious stupidity and check the surveillance feed or call security to do so on your behalf, and at least for the next few moments you counted your blessings you didn’t, instead walking towards your office door.

You heard footsteps approaching from down the corridor behind the closed doors. The last employee – your secretary – had left three hours ago, and there were no idol groups practicing tonight. Security wouldn’t roam the floors aimlessly without first informing you.

You drew your gun as you stood behind your doors, safety flicked off.

The door swung open, you could hear your heart beat in your throat.

Without sparing a second thought or a glance, your arm extended the barrel of the gun against the temple of the tall man.

It took a moment longer for your mind to recognize the figure that stood before you, as he wrapped his fingers around the barrel, your eyes focusing from his long fingers to his deep scowl, punctuated by his narrowed blue eyes.

“What the hell are you doing?” he asked aggravation evident in his tone.
The overwhelming need to form a response coursed through you and yet the impulse would not be answered by your brain, so you stood there, looking absolutely petrified.

This was a false alarm, you intuition finally declared, you had reacted prematurely, the danger continued to loom. You wanted to tell your husband your irrational fears and yet knowing they would be dismissed as a trick of the mind prevented you.

Your fingers fell away from their grip before Seto’s. He brought the gun down by the barrel, switching it to his dominant hand.

“Is everything alright?” He questioned after observing your startled expression, placing his left hand over your shoulder.

“Yes, I’m not sure what came over me, I wasn’t expecting you.” It wasn’t a lie and yet it was not the truth either.

“I came to pick you up, and couldn’t reach your phone. Where is it?” He stressed those last three words.

“It must have died in my bag.” Rookie mistake, you should have held on to that phone like your dear life. The situation would be drastically complicated if who had walked in wasn’t your husband.

“It’s late, I’m taking you home.”

…

Seto’s hand landed immediately over your thigh as he stepped into the driver’s seat next to you. In fact, his left hand found its way to your thigh before his right hand gripped the steering wheel.

You must have appeared incredibly shaken for him to react this way.

As he pulled into the empty roads, completely desolate at the stroke of midnight, you cautiously placed your own, considerably smaller hands over his, reciprocating his gesture.

It always surprised you that his hands were warmer than yours.

“Your hands are cold,” he noted as if on cue, eyes trained on the deserted stretch of road ahead of him.

You clutched it between your hands and brought it up to your chest. Shoulders slightly hunching over as you allowed your neck to fall against it.

The way he glanced over at you at this motion, eyebrow raised made you wonder if he would pull his hand away from the awkward angle you held it at. Instead, he focused back on the road, a faint smirk gracing his lips.

For a moment, the sensation of being able to breathe again returned to you, the inhibitions from earlier that day melting at his touch.

You wouldn’t say that he drowned out your intuition, but he certainly helped the feeling of unexplained, imminent danger feel distant.
This solace lasted but a moment.

Abruptly a ripple scattered across the windshield directly before your eyes. The car lurched backwards. The glass in front of you became frosted in a shape resembling the web of a spider or Chantilly lace. The ear shattering explosion was only processed a long second after. You could feel your heart stop as your mind desperately scrambled to reassemble the fragments of thought that splintered in the moment the bullet lodged itself into the glass a mere foot in front of you.

Human intuition was a frightening thing indeed.

“Seto, hand me my gun,” you urged your husband. You couldn’t recall ever forming such a thought.

You registered your seatbelt being undone as the arm you were gripping on to was forcefully ripped away from you; the same arm wrapped around your shoulders a moment later, forcing you across Seto’s lap.

“If you’re serious about having this child, you will stay down,” he barked in command.

His tone informed you that his order was to be accepted as absolute. He wasn’t lacking reason, so you obeyed.

His arm tightened around you to a degree that was painful as it held you away, protecting you from experiencing what was unfolding before you.

You wondered how you must have sinned in a previous birth to be forced to relive this nightmare, as if the two of you were endlessly wandering the seventh circle of hell all over again.

You felt disoriented in hearing crossfire beyond the confined of your car. Seto wasn’t firing. Three consecutive bullets made impact with what felt to be your husband’s side of the windshield. The car shook violently, and Seto’s grip around you loosened.

Had the glass shattered? Deafened by the rain of bullets outside, you couldn’t be sure.

You could feel Seto’s arm weighing limply against you.

Possessed by panic, you tried shooting upright to assess the situation. The car continued to move forward.

“I think I warned you to stay down,” you heard his voice growl through gritted teeth as he held you down again. You didn’t think you’d ever been so welcoming of his irritated voice.

“Are you hurt?”

“Of course not.”

His tone suggested that you had asked a stupid question and perhaps you had, but even Seto Kaiba wasn’t bulletproof. A bullet that could pierce reinforced glass would make easy work of human skin and bones.

You needed to react, it was the only way you coped with stress, so being rendered immobile, splayed across his lap, your mind was collapsing on itself.

Your body shuddered internally each time the car shook at the impact of another bullet.

You counted seven, so far.
“Let me help,” you protested, careful not to distract him.

“Do you realize – never mind, just stay where you are.” He wouldn’t entertain the thought.

You could feel fear paralyzing you with each round of bullets that you heard leaving the barrels.

Eight.

Tilting your head towards your husband’s face, you could see concern beneath the composure. His jaw was clenched as he steadily drove forward, occasionally swerving to avoid oncoming bullets.

Nine.

You winced at the impact.

“We are not going to die,” he affirmed.

“Damn right we are not,” you agreed, your voice materializing outside your lips barely above a whisper, punctuated by a thin, high pitched tone of voice.

You could see a faded smirk find the corner of his lip.

“That’s the girl I married.”

You didn’t have a form of measure for how much time passed drowning in an endless, clashing stream of bullets before Seto’s arm finally lifted away.

You slowly sat back up to see four black cars surrounding yours, guarding you from all sides. You could see men sitting at the windows of each car, guns at the ready. You slowly shifted your gaze over to the windshield to see frosted disks painted across the windshield in front of Seto, too innumerable to count, blending into each other, almost entirely obscuring his vision of the road, but it didn’t seem to disorient him.

Feeling your head collapsing against the back rest, your mind was a blank and yet muddled canvas.

Moving your hair over your left shoulder, you moved your right arm to place over his left, which was over the steering wheel again.

You couldn’t be sure if it was genuine fearlessness or if you were too disconcerted to react appropriately to the experience, but you succeeded in offering him a hardened expression which conveyed strength.

“We’re okay,” you simply offered, “we’re okay… because of you.”

His unfazed composure looked back at you drawing a small smile from you, at least at first.

You didn’t think your calm disposition offered any form of comfort to the man, you simply didn’t believe he needed it. You were wrong.

Except, unbeknownst to you, this reaction was not normal. This wasn’t a state of composure; rather, shock had disabled all other emotions. This was severe distress, a worst case reaction to unbearable stress.

And as more time passed, the more this became apparent to Seto, who watched you sit placidly, appearing perfectly poised, entirely void of emotion or vocal thought, as if a doll on a shelf.
He had reached out to you, but you hadn’t so much as flickered your eyes in the direction.

You hadn’t questioned him on if he knew whether the attacker was the same as the previous instance, or who it was that was guarding the car. Even if easily deduced with common sense, he knew you would have asked for confirmation.

He watched your chest rise and fall softly, eyes glazed over.

He grew increasingly agitated under his own flawlessly poised mask. You remained unresponsive to him lacing his fingers through yours and tightening his hand.

The colour was entirely drained from you as you arrived at the mansion. Your complexion so ghostly that your husband feared you had stopped breathing.

He called your name, once, and then again.

The third time, he leaned in touching your face from the door of the passenger seat.

You mechanically turned your head up to meet his. The motion was unnerving even to him beyond his stoic countenance.

“We’re home,” he informed, wrapping an arm around back, pulling you to your feet.

“Are we?”

…

You vaguely recalled how you came to be where you were.

Seto had motioned to carry you from the garage but you had refused, walking up on your own.

He had business to take care of and so you found yourself alone in your bedroom, changing into your light blue silk robe, slipping it over your bare form and tying it at the waist, lace lining the hem above your knee and the cross over across your chest.

You could tell something was amiss, as if you were seeing the world from inside a hollow shell, through the eyes of someone else. It was a strange sort of state of hypnosis, but you wouldn’t realize.

Walking into the bathroom, your mind said your body was disintegrating into sand, your legs fading from under you. So obviously you collapse, temples kissing the hard stone.

Where were your hands, why were they not thrown out to catch you, you wondered.

How do you not realize, you heard a voice ask, your hands are against your stomach, fingers digging in, trying to hold on to something that’s no longer there.

Chapter End Notes
This chapter is almost 5000 words, I don’t know what happened, it just kept going because I already had the end planned out and all the details were needed to get to that point.

Thank you for bearing with the lengthy chapter :)


Hello ~

So this is a shorter chapter. There are a lot of emotions to work through so it will spread over a few chapter this break up, uh I mean process.

This particular one deals with a lot of insecurities, mostly coming from the reader's awful habit of psychoanalyzing her husband and his inability to express more than one coherent thought per chapter.

Also, I figured, If Kaiba has weeks to waste recreating the pharaoh's perfect coiffed hair and months to waste excavating a tomb and inventing a machine to reassemble the puzzle from scratch, which is of no consequence in terms of profit to his corporation, he has time to take a day off to comfort the woman he loves.

Not to mention, he spent days unconscious inside what he called an 'Egyptian Fairytale' in the original series.

For a moment you didn’t know where you were. A white orb spun away from you before finding its place on the ceiling. Your eyes focused on a worried expression, lips that moved but wouldn’t speak.

Finally, behind an ear piercing shrill in your mind, you heard your name being called, crimson fingertips touching your face. Your first thoughts were who he had killed, if he had killed someone. Otherwise why were his hands stained with blood?

You could feel his arm under you as he knelt over you on the bathroom floor, asking if you were alright. They were all distant sensations, even his voice was far away, drowned out by the grating feeling that you’ve forgotten something, or rather left a part of you, lost a part of you?

Something was seeping out.

Disoriented and afraid, you leaned forward, arms holding you up as yours dangled lifelessly by your side. Your robe was bloodstained, the once hydrangea blue lace dyed red. Crimson had washed over the edges of the smooth silk.

You understood what it meant but also didn’t. You weren’t sure if it was denial or if you were incapable of forming such a thought.

“Why is there so much blood?” you asked him, expression warped with horror. “Why is there so much blood?” you repeated, your tone elevating into a pitch which threatened to crack.

Blue eyes darted between your own, desperately searching for an answer. For the first time, possibly in his entire life, the young CEO didn’t have an answer to give. There was nothing he could say to you that would remedy this. Seto Kaiba was at a loss for words.

Tears gathered in your eyes, you were absolutely distraught, and yet you couldn’t cry. Your face...
made all the motions to, but you couldn’t make the tears fall, so the suffocation welled and welled
till you felt you couldn’t draw in air. The feeling of faintness followed.

A painful, tightness knotted in your lower abdomen and the pain spread to every nerve of your
body. Motionless arms coming to life, you clutched your stomach, falling into his chest.

Writhing in agony, you didn’t know which part of your body was more in agony for you to
concentrate on. You felt flushed. You could feel your throat clenching, an unpleasant flavour
washing through.

You cried out repeatedly. He wouldn’t respond, but you could feel his grip getting tighter.

“We need to go to the hospital,” he finally spoke, voice so low it was barely above a whisper, his
expression a forced blankness.

“I’ll be fine,” you rejected, voice so strained it grated against your own ears. You heard him sigh.

His white dress shirt was stained a rusty vermillion.

“You’re bleeding out,” he repeated firmly, though an edge betrayed his composed tone. “Calm
down and clean yourself up or I will do it for you.”

His steady voice was unnerving to you in that moment in how starkly it contrasted the tone of the
situation.

Your body convulsed awkwardly as if you were sobbing for a few more moments, except the tears
continued to be absent.

Eventually, clenching your teeth through the agony that pulsated inside you, he pulled you to your
feet.

“Can you stand?”

You nodded slowly.

He left you for a few moments, ordering for you to keep the bathroom door unlocked. Cleaning
yourself and bringing yourself to a more presentable state, you could feel a sharp headache forming
where your head had met the marble, dull pain coursed through the skull from the point of impact.

Every movement, each breath felt laboured. Shedding your robe and changing into a loose tunic
dress felt as if you had trekked a mile uphill.

You thought you would surely lose consciousness if you had to put on shoes.

You wouldn’t acknowledge what was happening as you brought yourself to sit on the edge of the
bed; you unhooked your fingers from around your ballet flats, letting them fall to the ground beside
you.

Seto knelt at your feet, picking up your discarded shoes. Picking one up from its place on the
ground, he stretched it across the sole of your foot, and following the same motion with the other,
securing it.

“This is going to tear us apart,” you whispered.

“You’re spewing nonsense again. Why would I let this affect us?” He gaze was casted at the
ground.
You noticed he had changed into a black shirt that bordered on being a turtle neck but wasn’t.

You got up to walk but he wouldn’t allow it.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” he snapped, leaving you confused for a moment. He bent down slightly, slipping his hands from under you and lifting you against his chest.

...

Quite possibly the only thing worse than experiencing a miscarriage emotionally, was having to ride it out physically.

At the hospital, you were given medication to soften your body that allowed for all the tissue to be expelled. This forced contractions and the tearing pain infinitely worsened.

Your fingers laced through Seto’s, clutching it tighter each time your body convulsed until the blood in your knuckles ran dry. It was one of the worst nights of your life. You could read the despair in his eyes, thinly veiled with a stoic mask.

He tried numerous times to bring himself to say something but reserved himself to silence, he had no comfort to give.

You understood. You imagined he saw this as your weakness, and he would be right, you didn’t deserve his forgiveness.

...

Waking up the next morning, from your bed you could see dusty sunlight forcing itself through the cracks in the drawn curtains. The glow of the bedside lamps were no more but the sunlight afforded a thin veil of light across the room.

Last night’s event felt like a distant lifetime and yet your sore body reminded you it wasn’t.

Your mind registered a distinct ticking sound above your head, and you blindly reached towards it. Your eyes re-opened to find one of Seto’s watches, the links of the strap stained with your blood. The watch read half past ten.

For a moment, your mind flickered to your schedules and work obligations, only to be reminded that you had asked your secretary for everything to be cancelled for the next couple of days, or rather Seto had done so against your objections.

Your mind was just beginning to wonder about him when the watch was plucked out of your hands.

“Are you feeling better?”

You couldn’t lie, the gruff voice startled you.
You slowly turned yourself on your side to see him leaning away, placing his laptop on his
nightstand.

His presence next to you disoriented you. He should have been at work. It was a weekday.

“Why are you here?”

“It’s my bedroom. They said the fall didn’t give you a concussion,” he mused quite seriously,
leaning over, hand cautiously touching your bruised forehead.

“No,” you clarified, “I meant – why aren’t you at work?”

“I took a day off.”

You could feel the world stop rotating on its axis. Have you heard correctly? Seto Kaiba took a day
off?

Those words didn’t fit right in a sentence. You must have hit your head harder than you had
imagined.

“You – I’m sorry, took a what?”

“A day off,” he repeated quite annoyed. “I think we need to have your head scanned again, I think
the fall did more damage than we assumed.”

You concurred.

“Why would you take a day off?” you asked as you pulled yourself against the headboard. “Don’t –
my head’s fine, I’m honestly asking,” you interrupted him as you watched his mouth contort to say
something insulting again.

“I thought it would help – you,” he spoke hesitantly, faltering towards the end with his choice of
words.

To anyone else, their husband taking the day off at a time like this may have been a given, and yet
to you, you felt you had received the whole world in a moment everything was taken away from
you.

“It does… help.” You thought for a moment. “I’m sorry; I lost something that belonged to the both
of us. I was weak.”

“It wasn’t something that we never expected.”

That stung. You understood he was only being himself; that he was in his own way attempting to
console you, but it gave the impression that he was indifferent to the turn of events. It also implied,
in his not denying your words, his agreement.

A sob slipped your lips unexpectedly at the thought. You were quick to clasp your hand over your
mouth to muffle it, choosing to force it back in and suffocate in it instead.

A long silence fell over the both of you.

“I’m aware that sometimes, I don’t express myself and that causes you to misunderstand. What
happened wasn’t something within your control. I don’t blame you. What we lost was never ours
to start. Focus on healing yourself and try to move on. What’s ours will come.”
You turned to look at him, eyes reading mild surprise. You found consolation in how he was interpreting the situation. His perspective made apparent the difference in life experience between the two of you.

What was the end of the world for you when processed through the shallow lens of your inexperience, to him, was just another hurdle to overcome, but you were so mortified, body and soul that you didn’t know if there would be a next time, if you would allow a next time. You feared the repercussion of another similar outcome.

You wanted to touch him but didn’t feel you had the right. You could feel his gaze against your profile.

“You’ve given up,” he declared.

“That’s not true.”

“I always tell Mokuba, if at first you don’t succeed, you try until you achieve the intended result.”

At times such as this, he didn’t feel like an equal, rather a guardian or a protector.

“I’ll keep those words well.”

Silence ensued. You could hear your breathing against his in the empty room. They were out of sync. You wondered if this was a reflection of your relationship; walking besides each other, but always one stride out of step.

You wondered if the discord in perspectives created by experience or lack thereof, translated into drastically differing dispositions, would ultimately force you to drift apart due to the resulting dissonance.

What had offered you consolation moments ago became frightening.

The charm in what he perceived as childish innocence would eventually fade and it would become tiresome. He would leave; he just didn’t know it yet.
Heart That's A Beat Slower

Chapter Notes

So... I wrote this chapter over again, twice, because of all the readers I traumatized with the last chapter, so enjoy the fluff, well as much as the situation allows.

This is extremely short, but you know how the spiel goes, lol hopefully it's still good. It just needed to be broken there for it to flow there without dragging on.

Enjoy :)

*Also, as some of you have already noticed, I lied, I started my other series Surrender Me Your Heart earlier than I said. I know I said I wouldn't start it before this was over but as I was writing this chapter, it became so distracting to the point I just needed it out of my system.

THIS WILL REMAIN a priority, but I will also update that regularly. Let's play the 'how quickly will I burn myself out? game'

The physical closeness was an illusion. The distance continued to grow, perpetuated by both your unwillingness to express your sentiments.

“Lie down with me?”

“You should eat something first,” he objected flatly.

His heart was a beat slower.

“For the love of god Seto, I’m asking you to hold me! For fuck’s sake,” your voice cracked. You hadn’t seen your words coming.

You had been cutting one heartstring at a time, self-destruction was more than a distraction; you felt you were atoning, but in that moment, you seemed to have cut too many, because something inside you ruptured.

His composure was disgusting. His silence was sickening.

“Let me hear what you’re thinking!” you screamed, unable to stop, “if you’re disappointed or angry, if you think I’m pathetic or weak, because I feel I am! You’re – your silence is slowly killing me. You’re killing me… because I don’t know how you feel about this, about me. SAY SOMETHING, ANYTHING! Please.” You could feel your throat burning.

His heart was a beat slower.

He felt, just not with the same intensity sometimes. That shouldn’t have stood to invalidate his sentiments however.

Mortified by your own words, you waited for him to match your tone, your anger, but he simply watched you, not bothering to conceal the expression of mild surprise.
"If you want to be held, ask me. If you want something from me, ask for it, I can’t read your mind. I also can’t answer to the fiction you write in your head about how I feel."

His words always had the effect of feeling like a slap in the face.

Perhaps yours was a beat too quick.

You took a deep breath in an attempt to subdue your exasperation.

You were exhausted by his ridiculous poetry, so you would surrender.

"Fine then, hold me."

The words felt awkward leaving your tongue, and it was uncomfortable as it hung in the air, but slowly, he complied. Drawing himself closer to you, he draped his arms around you, pulling your head against his chest.

It didn’t feel right.

If only you realized that he was being held back by his own inhibitions, you would read him differently. You would be kinder.

The manner in which you each reacted to the situation was drastically different, and yet how it was interpreted in each of your minds; the self-blame, it reflected each other, in a way that caused misunderstandings.

How easily you felt he came to accept the situation fooled you to believe that he held no remorse. You never realized that perhaps he also needed to heal. You wouldn’t even for a moment entertain the thought of him blaming himself. That his lack of affection came from a place of insecurity was unfathomable because you would never feel your husband possessed such a thing.

"You should go to work. I’m wasting your time," you finally said.

"I’m not leaving you."

"Go work in your study then," you offered.

"Is that what you want?"

"No."

"Then why ask for it. Don’t ask for things that make you unhappy." His tone carried friction.

You could feel sleep knocking, your head rising and falling to a steady rhythm on his chest.

"That I’ve let you down, that’s my greatest unhappiness," you spoke in a whisper, dizzied by the sleep threatening to take over. "I don’t want to lose you too."

"I love you," he declared firmly, a tone of exasperation betraying his calmness, “and that’s the beginning and end of everything. I thought I had made that clear. My sentiments towards you won’t change like the direction of the wind. I’m not fickle that way. Your continued distrust is what disappoints me, nothing else."

You stayed completely still, stunned by his words. There was more.

"I put you before my company and I wouldn’t do that for just anyone. You ought to know me
better.” His tone was increasingly rougher.

Sorrow, grief, a certain sense of madness, these were all things you felt for the loss, but the strongest yet was fear. You hadn’t carried the child long enough - less than two weeks – for you to feel a strong enough attachment, and while it still shook you to the core, what was unbearable was what had become – or rather what you assumed would – of your relationship.

“I’m sorry,” you began to say.

“Child!” he suddenly barked, startling you into silence. “You haven’t done anything that owes me your apology.” He sighed as he gathered himself. “What happened is difficult, I’m sure it’s harder to accept given your age, but it’s not your fault. It’s not the end of the world either.”

…

Waking up, you were lying down again. Seto’s words assuring you were the last you recalled. Your eyes opened to his collarbones pressed against the side of your cheek. You could feel his arm weighing heavily against your waist, the other supporting your neck. The way he was positioned and his breathing let you know he was awake.

“Seto?”

An acknowledging hum from the back of his throat urged you to speak.

“Thank you. This isn’t easy for me, but I’m sure you aren’t indifferent to it either. So, for putting me ahead of yourself, I respect you for that, immensely.”

He didn’t respond, but you felt his hand under you fold into your hair, stroking the back of your head gently.

You felt slightly guilty, for wasting his time by forcing a man like him to idly lie in bed with you for hours in the middle of the day, but those feelings of guilt were overpowered by comfort and contentment. The latter feelings weren’t exactly filling you, you just needed to feel them more strongly in that state of being, and that desire conquered your capacity for guilt in that moment.

“You’re warm,” you noted, feeling his bare skin on yours.

“If you’re awake enough to make pointless observations, you’re awake enough to eat.”

He pulled away, much to your disappointment, before walking around the bed to you.

You made a muffled cry in protest as he lifted you away from the sheets.

“Stop putting up a fuss,” he ordered, as he secured your legs around his waist, holding you against his right side. He leaned down effortlessly to pick up his phone that was lying on your of the bed, before slipping it into the pocket of his slacks.

Of course he had been checking his emails.

“What do you want to eat?” he inquired as he carried you steadily down the stairs without once faltering.
“I’m not hungry,” you mumbled against his neck.

“That wasn’t an option,” he snapped.

Walking through the maze of hallways, you caught the glares thrown at you by some of the maid staff that did their best to make themselves scarce as their master walked through with you in his arms.

“I can walk on my own,” you offered.

“I’m sure you can.”

You assumed that was his way of ignoring you the request.

“They’re staring,” you tried again.

“Who? I pay them to work, not sightsee. Tell me who so I can fire them,” he demanded flatly. “Or feel free to do it yourself.”

You chose not to counter that one.

…

Sitting in the dining area of the kitchen, you tilted your head to your side, reaching your hand to place against the side of his face. He turned his eyes away from his phone screen at your touch. You offered him a small smile as he did.

“You’re not going to fool me into getting out of lunch with that,” he declared stonily. That hadn’t been your intention. You genuinely just wanted to feel his touch.

His heart was a beat slower, but you told yourself that it was fine, because for now, it always seemed to follow yours.
I remember asking a long time ago if one bad chapter was excusable, so this time I’m hoping two bad chapters are excusable in a series because lord is this a mess. It was that awkward transition chapter that focuses the character’s attention back to their day to day life and it was a hard turn around given the gravity of what we’re coming back from… and what we’re going into.

I did explore to a certain depth the emotional complications and the physical changes following what has transpired so bear with that.

Enjoy?

Human emotions aren’t black and white, there is no right or wrong answer in how to address one’s loss and sorrow, and yet if you start to see in colour too soon, there is a certain feeling of guilt that creeps in, reminding you that you’re wrong, that you have an obligation to feel pain for a little longer. This was how you felt each time the numbness lifted for long enough to breathe again.

This reminder, this obligation pushed you under again, suffocating you, but the pain had become stale. You were tired of pointlessly grieving for the sake of it. You wouldn’t achieve anything, and the commitment to continue feeling that sadness for an indefinite duration of time was what you truly feared. You decided you were done with this pity party.

“I’m tired of this,” you declared abruptly.

You were lying against his chest, his back against the headboard, left arm draped over you.

“You’re going to feel tired for the next couple of days,” he replied distractedly, eyes scanning some email on his phone screen.

“You’re not listening,” you concluded. You waited a few seconds without receiving a response before getting up to leave, but his left arm weighed against you like steel. The fingers of his right hand flew over the keys of his phone, eyes narrowing in what seemed like annoyance, taking a moment to re-read what he had written before sending whatever it was.

The man didn’t seem to fully comprehend the definition of a day off, though that said he had spent the past few hours with you without touching his laptop once, so for that you would give him credit.

“You have my undivided attention,” he finally stated, shifting his gaze towards you as you watched him over your shoulder. His brows continued to be furrowed from earlier.

“I said I’m done feeling sorry for myself.”

He studied you for a moment, eyes darting between yours as if to detect whether your words were sincere or not.
“I will admit, I’m impressed, you dealt with this a lot more maturely than I thought you would.”

“What?”

“I expected a lot more crying,” he smirked.

It wasn’t entirely a compliment, though considering the man who had spoken those words, you would take it.

“Take me somewhere?”

“Where?” he asked, bringing his face against the bare back of your neck, draping your hair over your shoulder.

“There’s a shrine out of town that I want to go to.”

“You said you weren’t spiritual,” he questioned.

“I’m not,” you replied, “but my mother was, and I think being there, I’ll feel closer to her, I think it’ll help me feel better.”

“How far is it?”

“Little less than an hour,” you answered cautiously, a little concerned that he would refuse.

He took a moment to consider.

“Fine, if it’ll help.”

You could feel elation seeping into your disheartened state.

“Thank you!” you exclaimed, throwing your hands around his neck, falling into his chest.

Of course, you could have driven yourself, but after the incident the last time you were in a car, you were quite severely traumatized.

…

Nestled at the foot of the mountains, a series of old stone steps led up to the weathered, traditional shrine painted a brilliant vermillion.

You breathed in the crisp late afternoon air, feeling the cold breeze of late spring chill you through the long sleeves of your high waist, white maxi dress. Perhaps a cardigan would have been a good idea.

The trees covered in moss were heavy with bright green leaves in preparation for summer. They swayed in the wind above you as you ascended the steps.

Even from inside the shrine, as you lit incense while you prayed, you could hear the rustling of the leaves outside.

Seto stood outside, seemingly displeased, or so his countenance read, though then again that was
his default expression.

After you were finished, you walked towards the wooden steps that led outside, sitting down, watching him as he stood in the clearing which served as the courtyard, staring off into the distance with his arms crossed.

“Thank you,” you spoke, “for bringing me here, you didn’t have to. I appreciate it.”

“I’m not a member of your production team, stop being so formal.”

Were you formal? You hadn’t realized.

You slipped your shoes back on before walking up to him, wrapping your arms around his.

“You’re freezing,” he noted displeased.

“I am.”

“You lack foresight,” he chided, sliding his arm away from yours.

It was slightly disappointing feeling his warmth slip away. You turned up your lip before turning to walk back. You heard his footsteps following you before feeling his jacket land over your shoulders. You reflexively looked up at him in surprise, but he had returned to being expressionless.

…

Time crept by with both of you returning to your regular schedules, and you hoped that eventually, the short two weeks which almost changed the course of your entire future would be forgotten with time.

In what was possibly the most brutal way to return to work in history, you were unexpectedly requested to join a conference call with the director of your Los Angeles branch in securing a partnership with a recording label - because he was much too incompetent to do it alone - at two thirty in the morning, effectively waking up Seto, who didn’t seem to care but you knew it would put him in a foul mood at work. Securing this deal went on until well past five, by which point neither of you saw any point in going back to sleep for the next half an hour.

The rest of the day progressed in a similar fashion, continuing to just be an unfortunate series of affairs, with uninvited drama in the morning which you felt fittingly served as the not-so-welcoming committee to the media storm that you would go on to drown in.

Walking into the quaint little coffee shop that was still fairly empty, the morning offered the illusion of a start to a decent day – decent ignoring the absurd amount of lost time and work you were desperately in need of compensating for.

This pleasant vibe continued until your name was called to collect your drink from the counter.

You picked it up before hearing your name called again from behind you. Assuming that it was just a fan that had recognized you, you turned to face them. You were partially right, they were a fan, just not of you.

You couldn’t fathom what had possessed the person into justifying their next course of action, only
that it happened, and while you somewhat understood the sort of emotions that could inspire such hysteria, dear god were you about to take a page from your husband’s book and slaughter the tramp.

Much to your displeasure, you were met with the intense glower of a woman who appeared to be in her late twenties, possibly early thirties.

The only thing that was running through your mind was what an utter disservice she was doing to red heads all over the world with how tackily she wore that upturned mop of a hairstyle, and while you desperately tried to suppress the urge to snicker at the thought, she had granted herself permission to speak.

“See me for a moment,” she demanded in her shrill voice.

“Aren’t I already?” you inquired with your eyebrow raised.

“Sit with me for a moment.”

“I’m sorry, who are you exactly?”

“I’m a programmer at Kaiba Corp.”

Yes, because that adequately answered your question.

Your eye twitched at her tone of voice, but heck, you had nothing better to do besides entertaining this clown for the next few minutes of your life, so you followed, taking a seat across from her by the wall of windows.

“I don’t appreciate the relationship you have with my boss.”

Your first impulse was to laugh, catching yourself before almost unceremoniously snorting at the comment. It took another moment for you to realize she was serious.

“What?”

Apparently your fit of laughter had come across too politely or perhaps she was gaging your character from your public image because it gave way to unsolicited ‘advice.’

Cue delusional fangirl rant.

“Let me give you a little advice. I’ve had my eye on him while you were still in diapers, he doesn’t need some fairy on his shoulder that distracts him from his work. You have no right-”

There comes that headache.

Well that was unfortunate for her, you thought tuning her out. You weren’t sure why you were still laughing through her commentary, possibly because it was the most ridiculously humorous thing that had happened to you in a while. At this point though, you were still far more amused by the situation than irritated.

You always knew some of his admirers were slightly unhinged and fanatical, but you never entertained that an employee’s obsession would stretch to such an extent that it would prompt a confrontation, with her infamously terrifying boss’s fiancé no less.

“Lady, this isn’t a preschool tug of war over your favourite crayon,” you interjected her sarcastically, “He’s the man that’s about to become my husband. Who saw him first is -I don’t see
how this is relevant.” Why were you even having this conversation, you wondered. “Now, if I’ve entertained your delusional fantasies adequately for one morning, and given that you still want to keep your job, I’ll be on my way. Have yourself a good day,” you greeted with forced politeness that held an undertone which conveyed your true sentiments.

Your sentiments were clearly missed.

“Who do you think you are!” she shrieked, launching forward in her chair. Expecting her to grab a fistful of your hair, you forced your heel against the tile, pushing your chair back out of her reach, absolutely flabbergasted when instead, you were bathed by a freezing shower of water, ice and what tasted like lemon and berry.

The audacity…

You were pretty sure the roles were reversed here.

Thoroughly soaked by the iced beverage she had thrown at you, white Bardot crop top stained a pale yellow and red, drenched to the point your navy bra was visible from underneath, wetness seeping through the denim of your flared jeans, you combed your hair, sticky with lemonade, out of your face with your fingers, stunned to silence with disbelief.

From the way she was looking at you, it seemed as if her reaction had been a spur of the moment impulse.

You were livid.

You were incensed and yet the possibility of paparazzi prowling around or this being an elaborate set up were too probably for you to mirror her reaction.

“Consider this your exit interview,” you stated calmly, motioning to get up.

She threw herself forward again, before being promptly caught by your guards and being held back. You weren’t sure what she had hoped to accomplish, though you were sure there was an army of other obsessed fangirls like her that were out to hunt you down, with intensified feelings of jealousy and anger following the engagement announcement.

One of the female guards offered you a serviette to wipe yourself.

“Report what happened to Kaiba, and tell him he needs to hire a new programmer,” you ordered the guards before walking off to apologize to the café staff and pay for the damages.

…

As it turns out, the fiasco that morning had been the prequel or a mock test of sorts for what was to come.

Finding half your PR department gathered in your office with the director herself present with a solemn expression was never something good to walk into first thing in the morning, especially not when you were still soaked in sweet syrup with sugar crystallising in your hair.

“What is it now?” you demanded irritably, walking up to your desk past the two dozen PR team
members camping out with laptops in your office.

You had intended to take a shower first, but it looked like that was going to have to wait.

“There’s been some…backlash regarding the engagement announcement –” your PR director began to say.

“Didn’t see that coming.” you remarked sarcastically, rolling your eyes.

“Reactions ranging from fans feeling betrayed on both sides and a considerable amount of outrage about your age. They feel you are too young to be engaged, especially considering his age.”

You knew the age difference would be a thorn in your side.

Lovely, now you were going to need to promote your relationship publicly, and your husband wasn’t going to want any part of it for several reasons, the main one involving him being an absolute arse and second being that his image was one that was feared and respected rather than adored, so no amount of negative press would have any effect besides further perpetuating and instilling that fear.

The worst they could do was boycotting Kaiba Corp. products and it didn’t seem like things had progressed quite that far.

‘I bet you’re glad we didn’t proceed with a marriage announcement now aren’t you.’ you smugly questioned your husband mentally.

“What the hell is my husband doing?” you growled under your breath to your director.

He’s had more time to react than you have, considering he returned to work earlier than you.

“We’ve received correspondence from Kaiba Corp. that they’re working on it,” the director explained.

“This!” you raised your voice, motioning to all the articles on your desk, “is not working on it. They aren’t taking care of it. Shutting down the media isn’t going to alleviate outraged public opinion.”

You couldn’t silence the masses. Though if one possessed as much power as Kaiba, you supposed they could, but being unable to hear noise didn’t mean they were appeased. Their sentiments towards you would continue to rot under the veil of forcefully enforced silence.

This was emotional warfare. You needed to appear on as many radio shows, talk shows and interviews as possible to justify this relationship to your fans. You would be forced to work yourself to death fitting those in to your schedule but it couldn’t be helped.

You gave orders to your PR team to do just that, while you personally took to social media to apologize and communicate with the fans directly, going so far as to hold a live stream on Instagram to express your sincerity.

This in combination with Kaiba Corp. demanding the removal of articles slandering the relationship, along with your company reaching out to publishers requesting articles be re-written, portraying the relationship in a positive light, slowly began turning public sentiment. You could see this reflected in the comments to a certain degree, but of course it would take weeks of you perpetually addressing it in the media for the negativity to entirely dissipate.
That somewhat unforeseen distraction occupied your entire morning, cancelling several meetings and cutting in severely to the paperwork you had to work through.

If you had assumed that this was where your day would have slowly taken a turn for the better, you were tragically mistaken. The day continued to steadily continue downhill.

Aside from the physical soreness that continued to persist, emotionally you weren’t in the most cheerful states of mind either, so when the director of the skin care commercial you were filming for demanded – as was within his right – you to be increasingly more bubbly and upbeat to match the concept, you could feel a mental collapse coming on. That mental collapse found you later that evening during a campaign shoot for a designer clothing line you were endorsing.

“Darling,” the creative director drawled, “I think the stress is getting to you, you could stand to lose a few inches around your waist.”

You knew you had gained a few pounds, though you never realized it showed. The contract was signed for a certain waist measurement, you couldn’t argue.

The designer concurred with the director, adding that you could stand to tone your thighs.

Having your body criticized and picked apart in front of an entire team of stylists and production crew was absolutely mortifying.

Under the weight of this in combination with everything else that past week, you barely managed to make it to your car before you finally cracked.

You bit your lip, holding back the tears.

“Where to?” you driver inquired.

“Back to the office.”

You would spend the next three hours wearing yourself to the point of collapse at the company gym.

You really didn’t think you would make the walk back to the underground parkade after that, or out of the shower for that matter.

You nearly sprained your ankle on your cobalt heels twice walking down the stairs as your lower body gave out from weariness, needing to support yourself against the wall at one point to stay upright.

You were reduced to a ticking time-bomb.

…

Your chin was leaning against the heel of your palm as you slouched over on your bed, elbow digging into your thigh as you reviewed the raw footage from a music video shot earlier that day which you couldn’t be present to monitor due to the media circus, intently making note of things that needed to be redone or removed.
You weren’t entirely sure if your husband was home; you had returned to an empty bedroom and couldn’t be bothered to check. That question was later answered when he had called you about half an hour ago asking if you needed to be picked up.

Cursing as you made note of segments you had specifically advised to be left out, you heard the bedroom door open.

“I’ve been thinking about you all day at work,” he whispered huskily in your ear, wrapping his arms around, leaning against you as he sat behind you on the bed.

You knew what that meant.

“I’m tired Seto,” you dismissed.

“Put that away right now or I’ll take it from you,” he threatened, a hint of playfulness in his undertone.

His hands started wandering at your silence.

You understood that he had needs, even if he didn’t intend to go as far as sex; you weren’t in a state of physical or mental wellness to comply. Insecurities about your appearance could have also been playing into this.

“Stop it,” you pushed him away. Your mind was still far too engrossed in your work. He wasn’t put off by this. You told him to leave a few more times before all the pent up frustration from the day found an exit through him. “Get away from me! You’re smothering me!” you shouted, turning to face him. You vaguely noted how he also looked exhausted, but your exasperation had taken over. “I’m not here to be your plaything all the time; could you not just leave me alone?”

His eyes narrowed before he stood up wordlessly. You had heard it too; the aggression in your voice that was a degree too intense. He hadn’t deserved that, especially considering he had no clue what was happening in your life that was causing you to be this way.

…

Over the course of the next two weeks, he made a point to be out of the house before you woke up, sometimes as early as half past four in the morning, and not returning till early hours of the next morning; he was leaving you alone.

He had gone so far as to walk around you when the two of you had crossed paths during an overlapping schedule.

As you continued to work yourself to the ground, increasing your exercise regimen to ridiculous levels of intensity each day, you wondered how long this behaviour was going to continue.

Chapter End Notes

Also, while we won't touch the main plot the next chapter, I have something that I
think alot of you will like ;)

On Your Worst Behaviour

Chapter Notes

Well, this was awkward to write... all -almost- 4000 words of it, but here it is.
Consider this practice for the other fic and read this while forgetting how I portrayed
Kaiba in the other chapter before this.

I don't know why I keep trying my hand at this, but the tags do include smut, so this is
me delivering. Hopefully I haven't somehow managed to get worse.

Enjoy?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The answer was the next Tuesday. He held out till the following Tuesday before he finally lost it,
and by that definition, you meant he went absolutely freaking ballistic. Though, what was initially
expressed as anger you came to realize was a prelude to something else.

Apparently there was a limit to how much sexual frustration Seto Kaiba could tolerate, and you
would soon discover that it was more need than you could handle.

It was around seven in the evening when the bedroom door swung open before being promptly
slammed closed.

You were standing by the bed in your black, bondage inspired sports bra and underwear, about to
change into your workout leggings so that you could go to the gym.
Ignoring his unnecessarily dramatic entrance, you continued as you were, reaching for your
leggings.

“If this little self-destruction spree is a stunt to get my attention, it’s not going to work,” he abruptly
declared in what you could only describe as a deep, maddened roar.

“You’re here aren’t you?” you challenged him, raising an eyebrow, turning to face him as he stood
a few feet away. Your actions had been by no means an attempt to get his attention, but you
couldn’t help but point out the flaw in his logic.

This was perhaps a misstep on your part because that comment only stood to aggravate him even
further.

“So it was then.”

“I never said that,” you corrected.

“Stop being a brat,” he barked.

“Me?” you matched his tone, “you’re the one ignoring me. I think this is the first time I’ve actually
seen you in the last two weeks even though we share the same bed.”

His eyes narrowed.
“I’m starting to think whether announcing our engagement was a mistake,” he suddenly stated.

You could feel your heart sink.

“And by that you mean you’re reconsidering this whole marriage?” You wanted to confirm.

“I am, you’re getting on my nerves,” he snarled.

You closed your eyes momentarily, holding your face up to the ceiling as you reopened them, in an attempt to keep the tears stinging at your eyes from falling.

“Give me a second, I’ll get out of your hair,” you began to say when he stalked forward.

“You’ll do no such thing. I think you’ve deprived me enough” he growled before burying his fingers in your hair, pulling you forward as he crushed his lips against yours. “Now I’m just going to take what I need. Be my plaything.”

His voice was especially husky, weighed down with desire. Your breathing spiked. You could feel the hair on the back of your neck standing at that comment as a wave of goosebumps prickled your skin.

The tears that had gathered in your eyes fell on to his shirt.

Your pride dictated that you had to struggle free of his grasp, even though all you wanted was to feel his touch on your skin. Somehow, your pride always had a way of edging out all your other thoughts and so you threw your fists against his chest.

He loosened his grip around you slightly, though his lips continued to kiss you roughly, and just as you thought he would pull away, the hand that had left your hair, travelled to the small of your back, forcefully drawing you in closer against his chest, trapping both your hands.

Your struggling was in vain and you would soon find out, so were your words, he was too far gone for disobedience. He wouldn’t be denied.

“Stop this, I don’t- want- you,” you disjointedly whispered as his lips brushed over yours, dizzied as you were forced to breathe in his air.

“Do I care? No,” he dismissed, lifting you against his waist before throwing you on the bed.

Carnal desire was evident in those blue eyes as he hovered over you, knee digging into the sheets between your thighs.

Mesmerized by his eyes, you only distantly heard his shoes falling to the ground. Brown hair fell carelessly over his eyes, swaying wildly as he impatiently tugged his expensive suit jacket off his shoulders, discarding it to the floor to join his shoes and socks.

You were in a trance, slightly shaken by what was happening. His haste made it quite clear what he wanted to do with you and you couldn’t be sure if you were ready to allow him, though ultimately you knew you were worrying about an answer for a question he wouldn’t be asking.

Untucking the white dress shirt from his pants, his long fingers made quick work of the buttons, and allowing the shirt to fall open, his hands anchored the sheets on either side of your head, caging you.

Reading the look in his eye, the erratic rising and falling of your chest paused momentarily as your
breath hitched in your throat.

He leaned down over you, lips meeting the skin of you neck, forcing you to hold your breath for a moment longer. He trailed his lips over your skin, nipping at it, leaving teeth marks. You winced as he bit you against a spot where you were particularly sensitive, drawing a moan from you against your will. You could feel his lips smirking against your skin before he sucked the skin in to his mouth.

Your hands landed on his shoulders, nails digging in as you attempted to push him off, embarrassed that you had acknowledged that he was in fact pleasing you.

Obviously annoyed by your defiance, one hand pinned both your hands above your head.

“I wouldn’t do that again if I were you,” he warned huskily, narrowing his eyes.

You could feel a faint throbbing sensation pulsate in between your thighs at the look he was giving you.

Dammit.

He didn’t spare any time as he brought his lips against yours, kissing you hungrily before you jerked your head sideways.

“What did I just say?” he growled dangerously, fingers of his free hand wrapping around your chin, forcing you to face him. He landed his lips over yours again, tongue outlining your lips before he drew in your bottom lip into his mouth.

You sensed a pressure building in your chest, wetness spilling out of you between your legs.

You were beginning to desire him and you couldn’t seem to stop yourself. Dammit.

You felt him sink his teeth against the inside of your lip, lightly chewing on it.

Fingers still firmly holding your face in place, he ghosted his lips down the side of your cheek to under your chin. He pressed his lips against your pulse, running his tongue over the spot before harshly biting down on it.

You arched your body into him by reflex. You could feel the throbbing between your legs intensify, a sharp sensation reminding you just how desperately you needed him.

Releasing your face, his hand landed on your stomach, before he ghosted it over your ribs, up to your covered breasts, his eyes meeting yours and never wandering away, his gaze exuding dominance.

“Take it off,” he commanded, slightly panting, hand roughly massaging your breast.

The bra could only be pulled over your head. You finally felt as if you had the reins.

“No,” you defied breathily.

You were mistaken.

“That wasn’t an option,” he husked, before pulling the elastic band up, over your breasts, exposing them to him. He didn’t spare you time to react as he dove down, taking your left breast in his mouth.
He swirled his tongue over your nipple, hardening it before biting and sucking on it repeatedly. This stimulation forced a long, loud, drawn out moan, immediately mortifying you as it fell over your own ears. His pulled away for a moment to look over your horrified expression, a low chuckle escaping his lips.

“Good girl,” he purred darkly.

You don’t know why those words aroused you so much.

Unexpectedly however, he pulled away entirely, releasing you. He got off the bed, slipping his shirt off, motioning to walk away.

Possessed by your intense desire, you reached out, fingers encircling his arm as you asked for him to stay.

“Seto, wait,” you called before your mind could thoroughly process what you were asking for.

He looked over his shoulder, a dangerous look in his eyes.

“What?”

Sitting on the bed, legs folded under you, your sports bra rolled above your breasts, the tension of the elastic band pushing them together; you wouldn’t know how badly you were turning your husband on, but he would make you beg for it, he had decided.

“Come back,” you spoke quietly.

“And do what?” he taunted.

You loathed him for what he was doing. Your gaze fell to your hands, as they flicked at your nails.

“Take me,” you whispered.

“I’m not sure what you mean by that,” he retorted darkly. “You need to be more specific. What do you want me to do?”

Your expression twisted uncomfortably as you kept your stare on your thighs, your hands bawled into fists, accidentally cracking a knuckle.

You heard him release a throaty chuckle.

“Ask for it and it’s yours,” he continued to taunt.

“Have sex with me,” you said, forcing your eyes shut. He wouldn’t budge, merely raising and eyebrow in amusement. “Oh for god’s sake Seto just, I’m asking you to fuck me,” you finally cracked.

“That’s a good girl,” he cooed, and in a second, he was over you again, pinning you against the bed with his body. You could feel the toned muscles of his chest pressing against your bare breasts.

He shoved one hand between your legs, his fingers sliding up your thighs before bringing them against your soaked underwear.

“You’re so wet for me,” he rasped against your ear, and you could feel the colour flood your cheeks.
He didn’t bother playing with you over your underwear, choosing to tug it off in one swift motion.

Two fingers plunged into your wet folds, and your spine arched, though with his chest firmly pressing against yours, you were held in place.

A moan left your lips, echoing against the walls.

“That good, huh?” he smirked, face inches from yours. You could tell he was messing with you, almost as if he was punishing you for rejecting him earlier. He was clearly much less gentle than he had been the first time, perhaps he had been holding back. The thought that he might have been, and that he was capable of much more terrified you. He had been more than you could handle the first time.

He raised himself on his other arm over you as he continued.

You could feel your pulse in your gut and behind your ears.

He thrusted his fingers a several more times, eliciting a string of incoherent moans from you. Your walls clenched around him as he pulled out of you. He brought his fingers up to his lips, tongue lapping at your juices, eyes locked on yours.

You grew apprehensive of the way he was acting, but you had been so close and desperately craved more.

He leaned down and placed his lips over yours, and you could taste yourself on him. You weren’t quite sure how you liked that.

He undid his belt buckle before unzipping his pants. It felt as if he was doing it excruciatingly slowly on purpose to torture you. You found it impossible for you to divert your eyes from the massive bulge in his pants.

“You’re staring,” he remarked.

No, he was definitely doing it to torment you, you realized as you shifted your gaze up to his face from his crotch. If his snide remark hadn’t made that obvious to you, his cocky smirk did.

Discarding his pants, his briefs slowly followed. He ran his hand over his length a few times before looking down at you.

You swallowed hard. You could hear the blood rushing against your ears in anticipation, drowning out the vibration of your pulse, though you couldn’t ignore the fear that was also welling inside you at how rough he was being.

His knee still between your splayed legs, he leaned over you, left hand wrapped around his erection, the other playing with your folds.

“Tell me how much you want me,” he demanded, lips brushing your ear lobe. A shiver swept under your skin just then.

Overwhelmed by the sensation of his fingers inside you, all you could manage was a strained mewl.

“That’s not good enough,” he growled.

“I want you,” you whimpered, writhing under him.
“What do you want?”

“You.”

“Only good girls who answer questions get what they want,” he taunted in a deep voice, gently blowing into your ear. You whimpered again feeling his warm breath brushing the inside of your ear. “Beg for me.”

He was really going there. He held a disturbingly lecherous grin on his lips.

“Seto,” you whined accusingly, clearly against what he was asking you to do.

“Do it!”

“I want you…” you pleaded, maddened by what his fingers were doing between your legs, “inside me, please,”

You couldn’t hold yourself together; your face had flushed over, your muscles already trembling. Your engagement ring felt tighter than it usually did around your finger.

“Go on.”

Your lust was clouding your judgement, and overpowering whatever remnants you held of your dignity. Your mind could only focus on having him buried deep inside you.

“Fuck me,” you whispered in a needy way, unable to maintain a proper tone over your erratic breathing. You could feel beads of sweat rolling down your chest.

“How?”

‘Like you don’t fucking know,’ you thought disjointedly to yourself in utter exasperation.

“Your cock, I want it inside me,” you cried out, adding “please,” when he raised an eyebrow.

“You’re a mess,” he chuckled mockingly as he rubbed his length against your entrance. “I didn’t think I needed to train you.”

He could insult you all he wanted; you just wanted him to take you already.

“Relax yourself,” he advised in a raspy tone, though those words were immediately followed by him shoving his entire length into you without allowing you time to react, so you wondered what the point of him saying that was in the first place.

Your walls clenched around him as they had the first time, making it extremely uncomfortable and painful.

“I told you to relax!” he barked, feeling the friction.

You could feel tears escape your eyes as you threw your head back, a strangled cry leaving your throat as you gripped the sheets in a desperate attempt to stabilize yourself.

He pulled out of you as rapidly as he had plunged in, before repeating the motion.

“Seto, please, it hurts,” you cried.

“You’re fine. Get used to it,” he ordered huskily, his tone cold, as he grit his teeth.
He continued thrusting into you sharply, but the roughness of his motions were causing you pain.

“You’re hurting me, stop it,” you squealed shakily, voice leaving you strained, “I feel like I’ll tear.”

You pushed your palms up against his chest in an attempt to stop him, eyes shut tightly, and feeling tears stream down.

He suddenly stopped mid motion, halfway buried inside you.

“Am I hurting you that badly?” he inquired, voice falling to a relatively gentler tone.

You nodded, keeping your eyes closed, hands still against his chest.

“I guess you’re still too new to this,” he said panting, leaning over to hold you, and planting a kiss on your hairline. "That'll need to change."

He began thrusting into you slowly, allowing you to get used to his size, before gradually increasing his pace.

It took a few moments for the pain to subside and the pleasure to take over, though when it finally did; it coursed through every nerve in your body.

One hand shot up to his hair, the other raking across his back.

“Seto…yes yes…oh god,” you whimpered unable to stop yourself.

You could feel his movements become increasingly rough again, and while you failed miserably at matching his rhythm, it was bearable. His erection pressed against a bundle of nerves as he rammed into you and instantly, a wave of euphoria swept through you, and your whole body shuddered at the sensation.

Your whole body flushed, thoughts splintering into a million fragments.

“Yes…right there… oh yes, oh god,” you moaned, perhaps a little too loudly, or perhaps the walls were amplifying the echo.

You could feel him pull you closer as he continuously ground his hips against that spot, though his words starkly contrasted his actions.

“Shut up,” he groaned, “They can hear you in the hallways.”

You felt a knot forming in your throat at those words. You wanted to counter that his grunts were louder than your moaning, but your wits had scattered too far beyond recovery.

The resistance between your bodies slowly dissipated as your skin began sliding against his, slick with a thin layer of sweat.

You couldn’t seem to obey his words as incoherent moans escaped you endlessly, cursing his name shamelessly against his ear, your voice rising to a higher pitch each time he pounded into you.

“You’re not very good at following instructions are you?” he questioned raggedly.

You wondered how he was able to form a coherent sentence, when your thoughts hardly made any sense to you. You had completely unravelled against the friction he caused as he drove his cock against your inner walls.
You would have forgotten your own name if he didn’t grunt it occasionally.

He pulled the hand he’d had inside you from under you, forcing two fingers into your mouth. You nearly gagged.

“Must I teach you everything, suck on it,” he harshly ordered when you eyes met his. "Consider it practice."

You couldn’t understand what about the action and the way he had demanded it of you felt dirty as you complied.

He watched you sucking his fingers intently as he rolled his hips into you, an unreadable smirk forming across his lips.

“And you call yourself innocent, not bad for a – fuck,” he interrupted himself, voice spiking as your walls clenched against him, his cock throbbing in response, “not bad for a girl who’s barely lost her virginity.”

Even if you had somehow managed to form a tangible thought in response, it would have choked against the fingers he was thrusting into your mouth.

You could feel the pressure in your lower abdomen become uncontainable and Seto’s grunting your name from above you was overwhelming your senses. Beads of his sweat dripped against your reddened face from the tips of his hair and nose.

His fingers left your mouth, his thumb moving up your face to move the hair that was plastered across your forehead with your own sweat.

“You’re wearing my ring,” he observed, looking down at your left hand that was splayed across his chest, nails digging into his pecs. Coming from anyone else it would have been a passing statement, but coming from Seto Kaiba, you knew it exerted possessiveness.

It was a not so subtle way of reminding you that you were his. You couldn’t contain the pleasure that pulsed through you at the combined sensation of hearing those words and his erection inside you, driving you to temporary insanity.

You hadn’t the time to comprehend you going over the edge until it happened. Your mind couldn’t find the words fast enough to tell your husband that you had reached your climax before white noise and stark white brightness eclipsed your senses, drowning you in pure pleasure.

You knew you had called out his name with a combination of obscenities, you had heard yourself, but you couldn’t recall forming those words.

Your mind recovered to grunting and flesh beating against flesh in the otherwise silent room, shortly accompanied by faint moans you recognized to be yours.

“Are you still with me?” he asked clenching his jaw. You vaguely registered nodding.

Riding out the ecstasy, you opened your eyes to see that your husband was going to have an unfortunate amount of scratches across his chest and quite possibly on his back tomorrow.

You could hear your juices mixing together noisily as he steadily continued his pace, pounding into you, continuing to draw out weak moans from you, your walls still sensitive from your orgasm.
The friction from his thrusts was beginning to be a bit too intense in your weakened state.

“Are you close?” you asked him in a strained whisper.

“No,” he groaned. “Why?”

Had you come earlier than your first time?

You could only manage slightly to shake your head no, shutting your eyes as you desperately waited for him to reach his climax.

The intensity of his motions continued, but the rhythm he had maintained started to slowly fall apart, and you knew he was close.

You felt him throbbing inside of you, grunts becoming louder, and breaths shallow. He started ramming into you harder and faster and you honestly wondered if you would lose consciousness.

“Fuck. Stay with me,” he called out your name in a strained groan. He clenched his muscles, bracing himself.

You could feel him throb inside you, ready for release as a thought flashed across your mind.

“Seto, wait, no,” you frantically tried to say, but your words manifested themselves beyond your lips as nonsense. “You can’t, not… not inside me, you -”

“Shut up,” he commanded again, face tightening as he plunged into you with his last few strokes. “Fuck.”

You heard your name being called loudly and the next you knew, there was a thick, warmth exploding inside of you, filling you.

Physically, you felt euphoric, but your mind was racing.

“What have you do- why would you?” you breathily begged to know, as his body fell against you, his weight crushing you.

“What’s the point,” he husked, panting, “If I can’t even come inside my wife?” You were at a loss for words. “Take the morning after pill,” he advised dismissively, still deep inside you.

Chapter End Notes

Tell me what you think!
Chapter Notes

I named this chapter the looking glass because both characters communicate their needs but they each only seem to hear their own, so enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“What you said about our marriage,” you began to say. He was still panting heavily against you.

“Don’t pay mind to things I say when I want to sleep with you,” he interrupted you.

“So… you’re not considering a divorce?”

“Of course not you foolish child,” he rasped in your ear before roughly planting a kiss on your cheek.

He remained that way for a few more minutes before pulling out of you. You could feel his seeds spilling down your inner thighs, soaking the sheets.

“I made a mess of you,” he smirked, leaving over you on your side, sorting the stray hair that was stuck against your face.

You pulled off the rolled up sports bra that was suffocating you, your mind hardly paying attention to what he was saying.

In your hazy mind that was only now re-assembling your fragmented thoughts; all you could seem to think about were those earlier words. Those weren’t empty words; those thoughts had to have come from somewhere. As offensive as he was, he was not careless; he was a man who contemplated his words extensively before spitting them out.

Even in the unlikely chance that it was just his ploy to get you to open your legs to him; you couldn’t find it in yourself to look kindly upon that idea. It made you feel like his whore, and not in an attractive way, rather it was degrading and uncomfortable.

It played over and over until you thought you would go mad.

You felt him pulling you into his embrace against his toned chest. You only vaguely registered this. You stared blankly at the door at the far end of the room.

You heard him sigh in exasperation behind you, as he brought his lips against your neck.

He began to say something.

“You don’t believe me,” he stated firmly. “That’s disappointing,” he added at your continued silence.

You closed your eyes, tuning his words out, which seemed to become increasingly harsher.

“I think that’s enough for one night,” you whispered.
You needed to wash what he had left you, from yourself. Resisting his arms pulling to keep you against him, you struggled out of his embrace. Reaching for the decorative throw blanket draped across the foot of the bed, you wrapped it around yourself.

There was a throbbing soreness between your thighs that felt as if it was binding your feet as you walked to the bathroom. You could feel his seeds flow out of you, down your thighs, past the back of your knees. A shudder ran down your body, you felt sick.

Walking into the bathroom, you locked the door, slipping against it to the floor as you gathered your composure. Crawling first over the marble tile, you held on to the sink’s edge as you stood back up, letting the blanket fall to the floor around your feet.

Turning the crystal embossed faucets, you ran yourself a bath. Wiping your smudged make up off, you stepped into the shower to allow the water to run over your skin, washing away the sweat and him.

You hadn’t heard the locked door open from the outside through the running water, as you swept your dampened hair over one shoulder before stepping into the white onyx bathtub, submerging yourself up to your collarbones.

You had just closed your eyes when you heard footsteps. Cursing under your breath, you kept your eyes closed.

It was barely eight in the evening; you didn’t think he would join you.

The silence collapsed your resolve to ignore the man and eventually you looked up to see him, a white towel wrapped around his waist.

His blue eyes were sharp as he looked down at you. He undid his towel, allowing it to pool around his feet. It wasn’t something you’ve never seen, but you took that as a cue to look away.

Bending forward, he hooked his hands under the crooks of your arms, lifting you slightly from the water, much to your shock, as he stepped in behind you. Sliding into the tub with you between his legs, you imagined your eyes resembled those of a startled doe.

“What are you doing?” you inquired daftly. ‘Why are you doing this,’ was possibly a better way to pick his brain.

“What does it look like I’m doing?” he retorted roughly.

He forced your back against his chest, your lower half pushing against his. You could feel another shudder threaten to break across your body.

In his absence, the space had afforded your mind clarity to think.

You had thought it over, and in short, you were afraid; afraid that he would leave you.

It was this simple train of thought that fueled your next actions. Gripping your palms against the rounded edges of the bathtub, you pulled yourself up.

“What are you doing?” he returned your question, irritation tinging his voice.

You pivoted on the balls of your feet against the floor of the tub, between his outstretched legs. Leaning down on your knees, the bathwater fell below your breasts.
You couldn’t bring yourself to meet his steel gaze as you laid yourself over his chest, palms against his pecs. He didn’t reject you or question your actions as you placed your lips against his jaw bone, tracing them down his neck. You could feel his pulse against your lips.

He brought the palms of his hands over your bare back.

You ghosted your lips down his neck, occasionally sucking on his skin. Tilting your head, you traced your lips over his Adam’s apple, gently kissing it as you passed over it. He arched his neck just slightly at the sensation, a faint groan escaping his lips.

His skin felt firm but soft against your lips.

Your palms travelled down his chest, eliciting a supressed hiss from him, possibly as your wet skin grazed against the fresh scratches.

You had begun to suck in between his collarbones when his hands pulled you away by your shoulders, forcing you to sit on your folded legs.

His hair was slightly dampened, stuck against his forehead while the rest fell wildly over his deep azure eyes. He was nothing short of a piece of art, a masterpiece that you didn’t seem to appreciate enough.

Your eyes darted everywhere, unable to maintain his gaze, but you couldn’t escape him; the musk of his sweat mixed together with his scent had a way of intoxicating your senses.

Slowly and unwillingly, you forced your eyes up his chest, to meet his own. They followed your gaze carefully up, until they met his eyes, intently studying you.

“God you’re beautiful,” he husked, his expression cold and composed. You could feel the muscles in your thighs tensing for some reason. He brought up his hands to move away stray hair from your eye, intentionally brushing the back of his fingers against your skin.

It was unnerving in its own way, his touch finally sent that shudder rippling through you, as you couldn’t help but think that those should have been your words.

“What is this about?” he asked in a deep tone. You were trembling, but you couldn’t look away. “Why are you crying?” he asked. You hadn’t noticed the wetness in your eyes, dismissing it as water.

You wouldn’t answer, instead tangling your fingers in his hair; your eyes fell to his lips. His eyes fell with yours. They were calculating your intentions.

He didn’t bother questioning you again, slipping his arms around you, flipping you on your back against the cold stone of the tub, leaning over you. The warm water moved violently. You were sitting on his left thigh, legs sprawled across his lap past his knees, one of your knees bent and raised out of the water.

Your head against his upper arm; his body was surrounding yours, there was nowhere you could look. You could feel his eyes piercing through you in your peripheral.

“Look at me,” he demanded, turning your face by your chin to look at him, your eyes reluctantly followed. “How many times have you asked me for a divorce or an annulment? Does it take away from this relationship?” You wouldn’t answer. “I’m asking you a question. Does it?” he inquired more aggressively, narrowing his eyes at you.
“I don’t know, tell me what you want to hear,” you asked in defeat, leaning your forehead against his chest.

The arm under you folded over your head, fingers digging into your hair, his other hand reached up to play with your breasts under the water. His tone remained harsh and cross, despite how he held you.

“I think you need to work on your trust issues on your own time. There’s not much more I can give you.”

You arched your back as his thumb rolled over your nipple.

“I wasn’t expecting much more. Maybe we should reconsider this like you said,” you whimpered under the strain of his touch.

“You can’t resort to ending this relationship every time something goes wrong. As the successor to my estate, you can’t afford to be saying things like that. Besides, when something is broken, you fix it, not throw it away, important things.”

Those were possibly the most profound words you’ve ever heard the man speak.

Continuing to bury your head in his chest, you wrapped your arm over his torso, the mental collapse you had momentarily put on pause two weeks ago, came crashing through. You realized you hadn’t addressed your grief or your stress in a healthy way, and all those bottled emotions were now demanding attention. It was only unfortunate that it had to be done in your husband’s presence.

You surrendered yourself to the violent sobs that escaped you and confusion and concern flashed across his face.

“Tell me what’s wrong,” he demanded.

“What isn’t wrong?”

From the death threats to your health, to what you’ve lost because of these, to this marriage, you felt caved on all sides.

He wouldn’t speak, waiting for you to continue.

"I'm always anxious- I'm always living on this thin film made of eggshells that I'm afraid will just crack and I can't live like this, it's eating me alive," you confessed, sobs continuing freely escaping you, interrupting your words. He lifted a hand out of the water, sending a ripple across the bathtub, a noise resembling the sea breaking against the sand surfacing in your memory. He tucked your wet hair behind your ear, a gesture so gentle and subtle to convey his attentiveness, it almost didn't befit the man. The look on his eyes urged you to go on, or at least so you told yourself as you did, "I'm always starving, I worked out four hours yesterday, my metabolism has crashed I know, it can't handle more than four hundred calories or something ridiculous like that, I could accidentally glance past an apple and gain weight. My nutritionist and personal trainer are losing their minds but it's never good enough, they want me to lose more. I’ve never struggled like this before"

You buried your head in your palms.

"The simple answer would be to leave those campaigns, that industry, but I know you won't. Do you want me to buy them out?"
Even to someone as powerful as your husband, buying out household names like D&G and Dior would put a noticeable dent in his pocket. Besides, you would just do it yourself, but buying everything that stood in your way, as tempting as the thought was, was much too absurd.

"No," you simply replied, adding in "are you insane?" as an afterthought.

"If it's for you, if you ask me to."

His voice was deep and hoarse and sent chills down your spine, even before he closed his lips over yours.

His kiss felt demanding and impatient, much like he was, and yet to a certain degree, it had the effect of pacifying you. It was odd, and you’ve noticed it for a while now. As someone who needed to be in control at all times in your life, giving that up to him at times like this afforded you its own comfort and reassurance. You loved to hate this feeling.

“I realize you worked hard to be where you are,” he began again, pulling away just slightly, thumb and forefinger still holding your chin, “but personally, it wouldn’t bother me if you choose to leave your profession. I’m more than capable of providing for the both of us.”

That was an oddly humble way for him to say it. The man could easily provide for the entirety of Japan, or the entire continent really, not just the two of you.

“You’re asking me to be a housewife?”

“Does it offend you?” he inquired furrowing his brows.

“The concept, immensely, your sentiments, not so much, thank you,” you confessed, lifting yourself to peck him on the lips.

“That’s all it takes to appease you?” he raised his eyebrow at you. “Offering to financially provide for the both of us?”

You wouldn’t deny the suggestion had its appeal, considering it came from the most powerful man in the country, but you’ve worked too hard to loosen your grip on anything.

“Seto, I only married you because my board members threatened my position as president of my corporation. I married a man I knew nothing about to secure my position. That’s how obsessive I am. What makes you think I was seriously considering your offer?”

“I won’t be able to come home for the next few weeks,” he abruptly stated, drastically shifting topics. Ultimately, while you mentally felt better, nothing was resolved. “My company is launching a product at the end of next month, so it’ll be hard to find time to come home every night.”

“I’m sorry… you, you what?”

You were quite clearly very upset.

“Not to say that I don’t trust you with your health – ” he paused to consider. “I don’t.”

Alright, that’s lovely.

You waited for him to finish picking his words in his head.

“Spend the nights I can’t make it home at the company with me.”
“You want me to sleep at Kaiba Corp.?” You had meant to convey your disbelief, though you weren’t sure if it came through.

“Yes.”

“I don’t think so.”

“I’ll have your bags packed by tomorrow morning.” His hand fell away from your face.

"There you go again,” you accused, "blatantly disregarding my opinion!”

"Your safety is much more important to me than your opinion,” he retorted flatly.

"What?”

"The people we are dealing with aren't to be taken lightly. I'm not letting you out of my sight. We lost our child because of them," he seethed lowly.

The reminder stung, you couldn’t quite comprehend why he felt the need to use that to further his point but you had to ask.

"So you know then, who's after us."

"Of course I know," he answered, as if it was the most obvious thing ever. You wanted to confirm your suspicions, though you didn't want to give yourself away.

"Tell me."

"The less you know the better," he denied.

"That’s nonsensical. If I know, at least I can protect myself from them. Like you said, I lost our baby because of them; I have the right to know!” You countered, raising your voice.

"Don't raise your voice at me," he snapped, "but that's exactly why it's my job to take care of the bastards that touched this family.”

Alright, so apparently he wasn't going to give into your usual tactics.

You brought your lips against his neck again.

"Don't even think about it."

They say a man should never trust his tongue around a naked woman; your man was apparently immune.

He was immune to you of all women, that was what was truly disappointing.

…

“You’re starting to fall asleep,” you heard a voice scraping against your ear roughly.

You could hear his heartbeat against your temple, the bathwater was running cold, and a chilly draft was grazing your bare shoulders.

He held you against him as he stood up in one effortless motion, stepping out onto the ivory mat, before setting you down.
“I need to get back to work,” he informed you as he threw a towel at you. You nodded.

“I have to be at a recording at three thirty tomorrow morning, so I’ll be out of the house by half two at the latest.”

“I’ll work from the bedroom,” he stated plainly before wrapping his towel over his lower half and walking out of the bathroom.

You weren’t sure why he would, but you had no complaints.

…

You were walking down a hallway of the broadcasting station to the recording studio around four a.m. following hair and makeup.

Displeased by the lack of caffeine in your drink, you cursed under your breath. You lifted you head to the oncoming footsteps or rather what sounded like a stampede.

You were greeted by a boy band from a rivalling company as they passed by. You acknowledged their bows with slight bows of your own since they were older than you, though by stature you weren't obligated to, and a swarm of people who you assumed were their stylists and managers walked around you, also offering you their greetings.

You felt something being slapped against your arm, an edge irritating your skin, though you couldn't quite reach for it until you were clear of the crowd.

Fingers running against your upper arm, you peeled off a yellow sticky note.

Furrowing your brows, you read the messy script sprawled in black ink.

"Strike three won't be a miss."

You could feel a chill run under your skin, hair on your neck raising. You stood there frozen in thought for a moment before you were flooded with infuriation.

They say even a mouse, if backed into a dead end will bite. You were no mouse, but your patience had thinned and cracked.

You didn't spare any thought decoding what it meant exactly in that very moment, though you had a vague idea.

You pulled out a pen from your purse, scribbling a response on the back and dropping it before walking away. You were certain whoever had stuck the note on you would be watching.

"Come at me," your note read.

…

The recording session fully occupied your thoughts for the next five hours. The extremely amusing interactions with your co-stars allowed no room for other thought.

Sitting in your car later that day though, your mind replayed the events from earlier, thoughts zeroing in on a man dressed as a maintenance worker, who in hindsight obviously wasn't a part of the boy group's entourage. He hadn’t bowed to you, which should have raised red flags, simply from a formality perspective. He had been wearing a hat, so your mind hadn't recognized right away, but he looked awfully similar to the man in the suit you had bumped into at the golf club.
You couldn't be certain however, and the hat intentionally hid his face, so security cameras wouldn't offer you a better view either.

Goosebumps prickling your skin as you relived those events, you instructed your driver to take you to Kaiba Corp.

You had some time before you were needed back at the company for a meeting with shareholders and hoped that being in the presence of your husband would calm your nerves.

…

Walking through the lobby of Kaiba Corp. the long skirt of your square necked, white broderie Anglais dress bellowed behind you. You slipped back the thick strap of the dress which threatened to fall past your shoulders, suddenly becoming conscious of your appearance as the pointed heel of your light blue stilettos gained the attention of all the employees.

Their stares fell away as quickly as you had gained them at the realization of who you were. Possibly following the announcement of the engagement, you sensed a certain reverence – or was it fear – whatever it was that your husband inspired in them, also directed towards you.

As satisfying as it was, it was oddly unsettling, in a dystopian-novel- freaky sort of way.

Looking up after checking the time on your phone – it was close to ten – you realized for an elevator full of people, it was deadly silent. You hadn’t noticed, but anyone who had successfully recognized who you were, hadn’t even stepped inside, choosing to take the next lift up.

‘Freaky-dictator-syndrome fest continues,’ you rolled your eyes in your head.

…

“Come here,” you heard being barked at you the moment you walked through the doors of Seto’s office.

Approaching his desk, you could hear the variety show you had pre-recorded earlier that morning playing on his tablet. You weren’t entirely surprised that he had access to the raw recording, but it was a little strange that he was actually paying attention to your work. Where did he find the time, was probably a better question.

You stood in front of his desk, tilting your head as you waited for him to speak.

“Explain this,” he demanded as he turned towards you. You merely raised an eyebrow in response. You couldn’t be sure what he was referring to. He could have been asking you why you were still wearing the same dress from that morning for all you cared. “Don’t act innocent in front of me. You seem awfully friendly with your male co-star.”

“What?” you spat.

“You’re practically sitting on his lap.”

“We were promoting our drama that airs next week. It was a game Seto, like you said, he’s my co-star, I’m paid to have good chemistry with the man!” you defended.

“And you have a husband;” he reminded firmly, almost accusingly. Was he insinuating that you were unfaithful?
“What are you doing for this relationship?” you interjected, returning his accusing tone of voice – here comes meltdown part two, you braced yourself, “I’ve been killing myself trying to sway the public opinion to support our relationship and you’re –”

“What the public thinks of us doesn’t concern me.”

“But it affects me Seto! It bothers me; it bothers me because my image plays heavily into my profession. You’re only thinking of yourself. You’re being selfish!”

He narrowed his eyes, but it didn’t faze you.

“Do you ever have anything positive to say about me?” he snapped. He had just found you at a sensitive time, and accused you on a sensitive topic.

“I would! If you did something that deserves my commendation! Earn it Seto, respect is earned not given.”

“My sentiments exactly, are you suggesting you disrespect me?” His voice was so low that even in this quiet room where you could hear a pin drop, it was barely audible. This actually achieved his intended effect of sending a chill down your spine.

How did this argument even begin, you found yourself asking, and when did you become too emotionally invested to stop yourself.

“I’m stating that your behaviour through this fiasco has left much to be desired.”

“You have no idea how much press I’ve dealt with because of you,” he growled.

“Me? It’s a relationship, that you insisted on announcing – which later if I may add you have said you regretted – and that involves both of us. The media is bashing me for marrying you, because you’re such a conceited, arrogant bastard, so this is just as much your problem as it is mine. Don’t you dare put this on me!” You were incensed at the audacity he possessed to declare that this media backlash was your burden that he in all his saintly glory was resolving as an act of charity.

“Lower your voice,” he snarled. “I have already told you my sentiments about that statement of mine. And you and I both know you’re not the pristine angel the media paints you to be. If they only knew what you were like behind –” You didn’t appreciate this disparaging remark.

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

“You know damn well –”

There was a knock at the door, “Mr. Kaiba, your ten o’clock,” his secretary began to say, appearing behind the half opened door.

“Cancel it,” he grit his teeth, returning his attention back to you as his secretary disappeared behind the door, promptly closing it.

“Are you calling me a whore? For sleeping with you, my husband?” you raised your voice unwittingly. “Then you by your own definition how are you different, or are you immune to such sexually derogatory implications simply because you are a man?”

“Perhaps my methods of addressing it were misguided,” he spoke, pinching the bridge of his nose. “I’m stating that if your image wasn’t so crystal clear, my reputation wouldn’t be a concern.”
Perhaps you were misguided for coming to him for comfort.

“That argument could also be used conversely. And what of the age gap? Are you blaming me for being born too late as well?”

“Don’t be ridiculous. You’re being a child.”

“You’re supporting my point.”

He released a low growl, condemning your defiance. He leaned on his elbows, propping his chin on his laced fingers.

“Come here,” he ordered. You were hesitant, but you complied, skeptically raising an eyebrow. Walking around the desk, you stood in front of him, as he turned his chair to face you. “Kneel.”

What.

“You’re joking right?” you inquired, your lip turning up into a smirk which conveyed your incredulity and disdain.

“I’m under an immense amount of stress –”

“And I’m not.”

“I need release,” he growled huskily.

You knew what he was suggesting. You rolled your eyes, diverting them out the wall of windows.

“I’m not your whore, Seto.”

“No,” he clicked his tongue, “you’re my wife, and since I’m married, I can’t exactly look elsewhere for someone else to do it. So come here,” he demanded.

“You’re being ridiculous. It’s barely ten in the morning; we are in your office, besides I don’t know how. Do it yourself.” you rolled your eyes, suppressing your urge to laugh as you turned to walk away. His hand gripped your wrist.

“I’ll teach you how.”

Chapter End Notes

Let me know how you feel about where all of this is going.
Hi everyone! I wouldn't call this a parting gift, but this might be the last one I post on here for a while, though I will try for it not to be that way.

Wow...this is bittersweet. Ugh, I had so much fluff and plot planned.

So I don't know, enjoy. Again what I've written for the majority of the first part is not my strong suit, so do bear with that, I figured, if it's the last thing I post, I might as well push myself. Not sure how I feel about the outcome though, so anyway without further ado...

He tugged you towards him with more force than you could resist, and you spun around, crashing against his chest, knee planted between his legs on the chair. You reflexively pulled back a little.

“We need to talk,” you told him, a serious expression falling over your face, matching his.

“We talk all the time.”

Your relationship had this disjointed, unhealthy habit of changing tracks whenever a conversation started to become exceptionally touchy. Neither one of you were willing to get to the heart of a dilemma and thus never found solutions to anything. Issues persisted and were constantly perpetuated through this miscommunication.

“No, Seto, this relationship is falling apart for more reasons than one. You and I both see it; we just choose to ignore it because we prioritize everything else in our lives over it. You said last night that if something is broken, it needs to be fixed, so let’s fix it.”

“I don’t have time for a pep talk right now.”

“You asshole,” you laughed derisively, standing up, though his hand was still firmly wrapped around your wrist. “You have time for me to give you head, and even the time for you to teach me how, but you can’t spare the ten minutes to talk?”

You were well aware of how strained the man was, carrying the weight of this corporation on his shoulders, but his requests were absurd. Clearly, this tension was translating into his attitude towards you, so it did occur to you that perhaps now, looking the beast that was the video game launch in the mouth, was not the best of times to address the wrinkles in your marriage.

“Just do as I tell you,” he demanded exasperatedly.

“I have a shareholder’s meeting to be at in an hour or so, I can’t possibly face them if I do this now, there’s no way I’m doing this right now. “

He growled your name in a pitch lower than usual.

“What?” you bit back. “Did a good deal fall through this morning or something? Is that why you’re
“Yes.”

Oh.

You knew that feeling.

You knelt down in front of him without a word, expression contorting into one of discomfort, heartbeat speeding up. He didn’t seem to mind your expression.

“Good girl,” he chuckled throatily.

Hands gripping his thighs, you asked yourself what the hell you were doing. You ought to be analyzing sales figures for the group your company had just debuted, not this.

“Well, undo the belt,” he ordered impatiently. You closed your eyes for a second as you gathered the nerve.

You ran a hand through your hair in frustration, before reaching for his belt, fingers nervously fumbling with the buckle. You couldn’t seem to unclasp it, so you looked up at him, motioning for him to help. He growled in annoyance before undoing it himself.

Unbuttoning his dress pants, you pulled down the zipper. Not really comfortable enough to reach into his briefs, you just waited for him to do something, most likely yell at you – and as if on cue he did.

“What the hell are you waiting for?” he barked. You bit your bottom lip.

“Anyone can walk in,” you whispered.

“I’ll worry about that,” he dismissed you roughly.

Your continued inaction finally wore at his patience. He pulled out his cock, his other hand forcefully wrapping yours around it.

You inhaled sharply as you looked his length up and down apprehensively.

“At the rate you’re going, my secretary is going to walk in before you even start,” he growled, “take it in your mouth already.”

“Must you be so domineering?” you countered irritated, looking up to glare at him. You couldn’t understand why he wouldn’t lock the door.

That only served the purpose of worsening his already rotten temper. You heard him growl again before his fingers tightened against the roots of your hair on the back of your head, forcing you forward.

“Open your mouth,” he ordered in a relatively gentler tone. Slowly and very hesitantly, you complied, closing your lips around his girth.

You wouldn’t say your skin crawled at the sensation, but it did prickle in a similar manner, almost as if to shudder.

The hand on the back of your head guided you, at first slowly, up and down his length. He was much too big for you to ever hope to fit him entirely in your mouth, even if you were brave enough
to deep throat it, which you weren’t.

“Look at me,” he grunted, tilting your head up slightly by pulling on your hair, forcing you to lock eyes with him as you sucked up and down his hardening member. The way he looked at you drew an actual shudder from you. He smirked quite satisfied with himself at your reaction.

In that moment, you suddenly became hyper aware of your surroundings. The quietness of the room, only disturbed by the muted whir of his computer behind him, the way the cold air from the air conditioner pricked at your skin, ears peeled for footsteps outside the thick wooden doors.

“Focus on what you’re doing,” he scolded as if reading your mind.

Slick with saliva, you could feel his cock pressing against your tongue and the roof of your mouth. You began slowly applying more pressure as Seto increased your pace, drawing a strained groan from him as he continued to hold your gaze.

Eventually, he stopped guiding you, though his hand remained tangled in your hair, ready to take the reins again if you failed to satisfy him.

Swirling your tongue around his tip, your hands applied pressure against him at the base, and his head arched back slightly, the hand in your hair tightening as he bit back a groan.

You were continuing to run your mouth along his length until he interrupted you.

“You can go deeper than that,” he husked, holding your head firmly in place when your mouth slipped downwards as far along as you could on him. His actions forced you to gag, mouth still around his cock. You imagined that was quite unattractive, completely unaware of just how arousing that was to your husband. He eventually released you, ordering you to follow what he had shown you.

You did as you were told, eyes casting downwards as you concentrated your efforts on pleasing him. Much to your relief, you were successful in drawing a few throaty groans from him, even if he had tried his best to suppress them.

He forced your eyes up to meet his. Unbeknownst to you, severely aroused by seeing you kneeling in front of him, cheeks hallowed as you sucked his hardened cock, lips swollen and wet with a mixture of saliva and his pre-cum.

“That’s my girl,” he commended in a raspy tone as you urged yourself to go down deeper, tongue massaging him as you grew more familiar.

You accidentally scraped your teeth against him, unwittingly drawing a hiss which conveyed pleasure, as he sucked air in through his teeth. You removed your mouth from his length, sucking in around his tip as you did. You tilted your head towards the base that was being neglected, closing your lips around it, pumping your hand around the top.

You slowly sucked along the side of the base, bringing your lips back to the tip, switching with your hand, allowing your mouth to slowly slip over his erection. The hardness felt wet and sloppy against the inside of your mouth and the palms of your hand.

He allowed this for a few more moments before closing his fingers around your hair again, pushing your head up and down over his erection at a furious pace.

“Fuck,” you could hear him curse your name under his breath, throwing his head back.
You could feel his cock throbbing against the walls of your mouth, unwittingly forcing wetness to spill out of you between your own legs, as you were overcome with a cold heat over your skin.

Your eyes shifted up to meet his as he continued to force your mouth against his throbbing erection. The clouded look in his eyes as he watched you, the way his brows furrowed and the shallowing of his breath told you he was close.

You heard him cursing your name under his breath, fingers tightening in your hair to such a degree you were slightly lifted off your knees, as he throbbed inside you once more before his seeds exploded into your mouth. He threw his head back as he cursed your name again hoarsely, followed with a string of profanities.

You were acutely aware of two sensations in that moment; his tight grip around the base of your hair, and the sweet-saltiness of the sticky warmth in your mouth, that was forcing your cheeks to swell out and threatening to overflow down your face.

Your eyes met his as he looked back down at you panting.

“Swallow it,” he commanded.

Weighing your options, you didn’t feel you had much choice; you couldn’t exactly spit it out on the carpet of his office floor.

Your head hung forward as you, squeezing your eyes shut, forced yourself to swallow it.

Swallowing that was possibly the worst thing you’ve ever willed yourself to do.

“Good girl,” he husked, stroking your hair and for some reason it grated against your nerves.

“Quit calling me that!” you managed as you unwrapped your fingers from around the base of his erection, slowly standing up.

Seto did up his trousers and belt buckle as his secretary opened the door almost immediately after knocking. Leaned against his desk with one hand, the other hand against your chest, you were still gaging on his semen, unable to compose yourself.

Your husband shot out of his seat as his secretary approached, maintaining eye contact with her as he wiped the small stream that you hadn’t realized was dribbling down the corner of your mouth with his thumb. He shot another sideways glance at you before turning you away from her by your shoulders completely.

It was mortifyingly obvious that she knew. It was obvious in the way she held herself, avoiding eye contact, quite clearly uncomfortable.

She opened her mouth to say something before you interrupted her.

“Get me some water,” you coughed, glancing at her from your peripheral.

She bowed, exiting his office in a flash. Seto reached out his hand, wiping away at your chin and down your neck with the back of his hand, expression a firm scowl.

You felt his hand rubbing circles on your back with his other hand as you attempted to compose yourself.

“It couldn’t have been that awful,” you heard him scoff, obviously annoyed.
“I think that went down my windpipe,” you wheezed. You heard him chuckle and you were infuriated, though you were forced to hold it in as his secretary returned with a glass of water.

“That couldn’t have been good for my acid reflux. You owe me, you owe watching a chick flick with me or something for this,” you muttered angrily under your breath as the secretary set the water in front of you.

“My whole life has turned into a chick flick because of you, get over it,” he snarled.

You flexed your jaw as you held your tongue, supressing another laugh, quite possibly a manic one. You appreciated the humour in the comment, though you hated what he implied of your marriage.

“You’re due for your ten thirty meeting, sir;” his secretary informed as she left the two of you.

“And these are the words of a gentleman?” He merely watched. “Fuck you Seto.”

“You already do,” he smirked, walking out of his office, leaving you alone to seethe at that parting remark.

…

For whatever reason after that affair earlier in the day, you felt thoroughly uncomfortable in your own skin through the shareholder’s meeting, so much so, that your secretary had asked you on numerous occasions if you were feeling unwell.

Maintaining your image throughout the rest of your schedules felt as if you were betraying your own conscience. You never saw yourself in your public image, that is, you’ve never particularly felt connected with that persona, but now more than ever it felt like a façade.

Perhaps you were overthinking it, or maybe you weren’t as comfortable sexually with your husband as you had assumed.

‘Practice makes perfect,’ a voice in your head reminded you, and you were just about ready to place your head in a guillotine and allow the blade to drop over your neck at the thought.

…

Seto had informed you that he’d be held up at work overnight so half past eleven at night found you dragging your feet through Kaiba Corp. again.

You had expected it to be desolate at this time of night but half the building was still occupied by frantic workers. You were quite sure there were labour compliance regulations against this, though then again maybe they were the overnight staff. The possibility of him having such an extensive roster of employees for the night shift made you roll your eyes at how unnecessarily extra the man was.

Walking past the secretary’s desk, you realized no one was present as you let yourself in to Seto’s office.

You should probably have knocked first.

You walked into a storm of words, among which you managed to catch “utterly useless buffoon,” and “redo the character design,” while everything else was a slur of technical gibberish.
In front of Seto’s desk were a group of men, visibly shrinking with each moment that passed, some in lab coats while others in suits.

Freezing against the door, you almost let yourself out when you heard your name being called.

“Where are you going?” you heard your husband ask, irritation weighing his voice.

You were quite surprised he had noticed you through the wall of people in front of him.

“You seem occupied, I didn’t want to interrupt.”

“It’s fine, stay,” he said flatly before returning to his tirade.

This continued for a good fifteen minutes, every second of it awkward beyond words, as you sat poised on the sofa at the far end of the office.

At times like this, listening to how terribly cold his tone can get, how loudly his voice echoes off the walls, you were reminded just how gentle he was around you.

“Now get out of my office and get to work,” you heard reverberate through the vast space before the men scrambled to file out of the office.

You smiled a little to yourself as you watched him massaging his temples in annoyance with his eyes closed. Groaning to himself, he loosened his tie.

You couldn’t deny that seeing him exert his power like that turned you on.

Walking up to his desk, you slipped behind the chair. He didn’t bother opening his eyes until you wrapped your arms around his neck.

“Seeing you like that turns me on,” you admitted in a whisper against his ears, feeling emboldened for whatever reason. Pulling away, you placed your hands over his shoulders, pressing your fingers against his tense muscles, massaging him.

He relaxed against your touch.

“What’s with you suddenly?” he questioned skeptically with his eyes closed.

“I don’t know what you mean,” you replied coyly.

He sat there wordlessly for a few more moments before pulling you around his chair and on to his lap. Wrapping his arms around your frame, he drew you firmly against himself. Burying his head in the crook of your neck, he was hugging you a little tighter than was comfortable to you.

“I have to visit the programming department,” he spoke huskily against your ears, “are you okay to stay here by yourself, or do you want to come with me?”

‘Those poor programmers,’ you mused to yourself before replying.

“I better not, I’ll stay here.”

“Suit yourself,” he said before letting you go and swiftly standing up to leave, forcing you on to your feet.

You watched him stalk out of the office, closing the door behind him in a way which made you ponder just how sturdy that doorframe must be to withstand that sort of abuse on a day to day basis.
Seto had been gone for a few minutes when there was a knock at the door. Slipping back on the raspberry Prada stilettos you were debating on taking off and brushing down your black sleeveless jumpsuit that you has worn to your meeting that morning, you called for whoever it was to come in, as you sat against Seto’s desk, facing the door.

The door opened to reveal a tall man around Seto’s age, clad in a tailored grey suit.

“Oh, I wasn’t expecting you Miss,” he addressed you by your maiden name, “I was looking for your husband, Mr. Kaiba,” he explained as he approached you. You thought it a little odd for someone who knew you were married to Seto to address you by your maiden name, or at the very least call you ‘miss.’

“He’s not here right now as you can see, and I’m sure I won’t be of much help,” you responded with a polite smile. He returned your smile.

“It’s nice to finally meet you, my name is Kaoru Hidehira, I’m a member of your husband’s board of directors,” he introduced himself, offering his hand, which you accepted with a slight bow of the head.

He was a handsome young man; dark eyes and brown hair, quite charming in his disposition and easily mistaken for an actor. It was hard to believe he was a board director at such a young age. Then again, your husband who was likely the same age as him was the CEO, so you really shouldn’t have been surprised.

“I didn’t see you at the banquet,” you questioned.

“I unfortunately couldn’t attend the banquet; Mr. Kaiba had me away in America for business.”

“That is unfortunate,” you smiled. You hadn’t considered that perhaps your politeness was being received as flirting. You were just content to meet someone that worked for Seto that wasn’t a raging loon.

You engaged in a few more minutes of civil conversation before Seto stormed back through the office doors, seemingly displeased about how his visit to the programing department had gone.

If Kaoru was standing a little too close to you, you hadn’t noticed.

Seto stopped abruptly as he noticed the unexpected visitor.

“Can I help you with something Hidehira?” he questioned, looking at the man pointedly.

“Yes, actually, I was waiting for you,” he responded in a tone that contrasted your husband’s. “I was fortunate enough to have the pleasure of her company,” he added, addressing you by your maiden name again.

It didn’t faze you but clearly it bothered Seto a lot.

“That’s Mrs. Kaiba to you,” Seto snarled at Kaoru irritation lining his tone as he walked to his desk, pulling you by the arm as he did, distancing you from the young board director.

“It’s been lovely making your acquaintance,” you smiled again, as you excused yourself back to the sofa, allowing the two men to discuss whatever it is that they needed to.

You were occupied on the phone with the director of your Seoul branch, watching Seto’s scowl become increasingly tighter as the conversation progressed.
Eventually Kaoru stood up, bowed to Seto and walked over to you to bid you goodnight, though by now it was well past midnight, and you stood up to receive his greeting.

The door had barely closed before Seto had you pinned against the sofa. You had failed to even see him leaving his desk.

“Don’t smile at other men like that,” he growled, hovering over you, “it gives them the wrong impression.”

Chapter End Notes

Just a little FYI, the first scene was written on purpose to read awkwardly given that it was her first time doing it and hadn't a bloody clue what was happening, if I do somehow manage to continue this series, it'll be written in a much more seductive way.

Thanks for reading this far :(
Leo Tolstoy's Heroine

Chapter Notes

Surprise!

I typed this on a flight, so excuse the formatting issues, it wasn't done on a laptop.

Thank you for all the lovely comments, I will get to all of them, I didn't have an internet connection for the longest time today so I basically just typed this the whole time. You all are the best, made me actually want to get this done faster! Literally uploading this on my layover XD

I will try to update somewhat regularly, just so the future of this story doesn't seem as bleak as my last notes may have made it look to be - unless real life interrupts more rudely than I am expecting :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I’m tired Seto,” you spoke quietly, reaching a hand up to his face, “I just want to go to sleep; I’ve been up since one this morning and I don’t feel too well either.”

His expression immediately softened as he pulled away, before resuming a worn scowl.

“What do you mean you don’t feel well?”

“I don’t know I feel nauseated, my stomach hurts, it’s probably just nerves and fatigue,” you responded dismissively.

“Have you eaten?” he inquired standing up and traversing across the office towards his desk.

“Yes, I had a burger on the way here, shocking, yes I know,” you joked, though as always the humour was lost to him.

“That’s not real food,” he condemned, as he threw open a door on the far side of the office, on the left wall from his desk.

You didn’t realize he expected you to follow, as he turned to look at you with an irritated expression.

“Come here,” he eventually barked when you didn’t move to join him.

Walking up beside him, the room before you was not what you had expected, though the size of it could hardly earn it the title of being an actual room, rather an oversized closet with a king sized bed cramped in to it, which was basically all it could stand to house.

“You have a bed in your office?” you question incredulously. You almost inquired what purpose it served but knowing fully the sarcastic and condescending remark that would surely follow given the man, you elected against it.

“Yes,” he replied as if it was most obvious, and you unintelligent to have asked such a thing. “It
also has a bathroom,” he added, motioning with his head towards the misted glass door in corner of the glorified closet.

“Has this always been here?”

Cue another stupid, smartass remark, you braced yourself; instead mildly surprised by the thorough explanation that followed.

“It used to be a storage closet. I had it renovated following the last game launch when I felt obligated to come home every night because of you.”

You really shouldn’t have been surprised at how skillfully he managed to take a thoughtful intention and taint it with the burdensomeness of forced obligation.

“Your bags should be in there,” he offered before turning wearily back towards his desk.

“Hold on, where are you going?” you asked, snaking your arms around his and leaning forward to peer up at his face.

“Work, obviously,” he drawled flatly, visibly annoyed by the obvious inquiry, yet again.

“Seto, dear, it’s almost one in the morning, you’ve been up since four, you need to at least have a shower or eat something or you’re going to give yourself a heart attack before thirty. Believe it or not, coffee grinds aren’t real food and it’s also not a substitute for sleep,” you objected.

“You’re advising me about my health? That’s rich coming from you,” he scoffed.

“I’m advising you about it because I know what it’s like to be one cup of coffee from a heart attack.”

“You mean like right now?” he questioned smirking. That earned him a glare and slap against his upper arm.

“Oh, shut up.”

In spite of his remarks and open display of irritation, he reluctantly followed after you into the closet and edged along the foot of the bed into the shower.

Falling asleep to the rhythm of shower water against porcelain, you were woken up to the sensation of the bed shifting on either side of you. Opening your eyes, you were lying on your side, with your knees folded towards your chest. Your eyes followed up along the arm that was caging you to find Seto hovering over you, dampened hair hanging forward.

He gently turned you on to your back, and you noticed he had changed into a new pair of dress pants, though you couldn’t seem to divert your eyes from his broad, bare chest.

You tried not to stare unabashedly, but it was obvious enough for him to notice, the corned of his lips curving into a smirk was a clear indication of that.

He was your husband, you contested in your mind, fighting the colour that was spilling across your cheeks; you had every right.

“I’m going back to work now,” he spoke in that deep voice that sent shivers down your spine.

You held out your arms, gesturing for him to hold you, disappointment stinging your chest when he pulled away. Instead, he collapsed on the bed beside you, before sweeping his arms around you,
and pulling you against the crook of his shoulder.

“You smell good,” you noted, burying your face in his hair, feeling him hum against the crook of your neck in response.

He eventually stood up to leave, and while he buttoned up a new dress shirt, you slipped into the shower.

The floor length blinds behind the bed open just a crack, the moonlight poured in through the glass wall behind you, over the gold speckled city.

From the open door of the make shift bed room, you could see Seto working absorbedly at his desk a few feet away, and you watched him as you fell asleep.

…

A few hours later found you walking through the dark labyrinth of hallways of Kaiba Corp., questioning how you had found yourself here and at a complete loss as to how to navigate your way back to your husband’s office.

You didn’t have your gun, it was so usefully sitting in the inside pocket of your emerald saddle bag.

You could hear your own footsteps echoing against the metal walls, each step forward greeting your chest with the sensation akin to a metal pin striking into it. You walked forward a few more steps before realizing your echo was much duller than the sharp reverberation your heels produced as it met the steel floor.

Realizing the following noise did not belong to you, you started running as fast as your heels allowed, a pointed edge striking hard metal at an increasingly rapid rate; the resounding echo reminiscent of the needle of a sewing machine against the metal foot.

You could hear your own breath fall against your ear, ragged and laboured. The faster you ran, the faster it followed. The dark hallway seemed to continue endlessly.

You felt a sticky sensation and something pricking your skin against your upper arm. Reaching around, you found the yellow sticky note with the messily sprawled writing stuck to your fingers. You were certain you had discarded it earlier that previous day.

The sound of footsteps against metal overwhelmed you to a point where you feared you may go deaf, until total silence fell over you. Had you gone deaf, or had the noise stopped?

You saw a masked man appear in front of you, and watched in horror as he pointed a gun at Seto’s forehead, before pulling the trigger.

“So!” you called his name before jolting awake in your bed, hazy sunlight seeping through from behind you into the otherwise dark room. The door was closed.

You were hysterical as you sat up in the empty room, mind still unable to completely salvage your consciousness from the nightmare.

Breathing erratic, sobs escaped violently, your mind was reliving it. Somewhere in your subconscious, the absence of Seto seemed to prove that the events you had just witnessed were
reality. This only stood to worsen your convulsions.

The door swung open suddenly to reveal a disconcerted Seto. His eyes studied you carefully as he rushed to you, closing the door behind him.

“I’m here,” he assured embracing you tightly. It took your confused mind a few to register his presence, and when it did, your hands shot up to his forehead, your fingers frantically sifting through his fringe, checking for a bullet wound, unable to discern reality from hallucination. “What are you doing?” he asked in a rougher voice, as his arms steadied you against your shaking.

The relief that washed over you as reality slowly began to sink through, possibly worsened your weeping, your cries becoming louder.

“Lower your voice,” he snapped in a hushed tone. “People can hear you in my office.”

As mortifying as this thought was, and against your best attempts to subdue yourself, the accumulated trauma had finally seeped into your subconscious and it was wreaking absolute havoc.

“Stop that,” he hissed again to no avail. He sighed exasperatedly when you refused to obey his words, digging you roughly out of the sheets and lifting you against his waist, forcing you to wrap your legs around him. “Shhh,” he soothed in what could be described as an angry whisper against your ear.

He continued this while slowly patting your back until you were able to calm down a few moments later.

“Have you come to your senses?” he inquired harshly as you held your face against his neck.

You nodded slowly.

He dropped you against the sheets without a second thought before turning sharply on his heel and stalking out the room, slamming the door shut again behind him.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, you could feel the mortification freezing your blood over in your veins as you wondered who was in his office.

A few more moments were spent idling that way before you received a call from your director of public relations regarding a plagiarism claim that was being directed at your company, forcing you to be present at work earlier than scheduled.

Falling over your own feet in the closed space as you got dressed; you pulled on a long sleeved, jade green jumpsuit with a large, cascading chiffon bow tied around the waist, and stepped into your nude Louboutins as you unsuccessfully tried several times to hook your Atelier Swarovski onyx chandelier earrings before finally pulling the back through. Parting your hair down the middle, matting it and pulling it into a tastefully messy bun at the base of your neck consumed a ridiculous amount of time, sparing you hardly any for your makeup, forcing you to settle for a simple glowing look, accentuated by a bright pastel pink eyelid.

Your director called you with an update as you dug around the bags packed by the maids for your nude, quilted Chanel purse before dashing out the door while still on the phone, to be faced with a handful of people seated around your husband’s desk, including the young board director from last night, who offered you a bright smile, which you returned, along with an older gentlemen.

The earlier mortification washing over you again, remembering what the men had witnessed of your behaviour that morning.
That was quite possibly the worst way to make an exit, you putting the unnecessary ‘dramatic,’ in ‘dramatic exit.’

You didn’t dare make eye contact with your husband as you meekly slipped out of his office.

Again you were certain, this was the worst way to spend your morning ever, and it wasn’t even seven yet.

…

The plagiarism accusation was a fiasco and a half, with a desperate songwriter falsely slandering your company after you had refused to sign him to an affiliate label.

Though as ridiculous as the situation was, quietening the rumours was child’s play, and hardly compared to the utter humiliation you were subjected to earlier that morning, which you saw no way to resolve, or rather undo.

Sitting at your desk while you analyzed sales figures around midday, a critical look on your face, Seto called you on your office line.

“Are you feeling better?” he asked gruffly as you answered.

“About which part, my PTSD or the absolute embarrassment I brought upon myself and you?”

You heard him sigh in frustration.

“Both, I suppose.”

“The latter, I think I’ll need to be reborn to get over, the former,” you hesitated, your voice dropping to a tone which was hardly audible, “I don’t know. I dreamt that something terrible happened – to you.”

“Well I’m fine;” he dismissed roughly. “Do we need to see a therapist?”

“I don’t think it’s to that extent, not yet anyway,” you explained. You heard him hum in acknowledgement. “Did they – did they hear me crying?” you asked falteringly, bracing yourself against your desk for the response. You almost didn’t want to know.

“I couldn’t hear you till I opened the door; I assumed they just heard you calling me.”

You exhaled in relief.

“Did you eat?” he inquired.

“Not yet.”

“I’ll have my secretary have something delivered.”

“Seto, it’s fine, I’ll have mine do it,” you interjected.

“Nonsense, I know better than to trust you on that, I know how you operate,” he contested harshly. “I have to go, make sure you eat whatever it is I send you.”

You heard the phone line die and you stared into the receiver in astonishment, wondering if the man had, for the first time in your relationship, ended a phone conversation with a pleasant, socially acceptable parting remark, instead of an abrupt insult before cutting the line.
Progress, you told yourself, feeling your mood immediately lifting following that phone conversation, only occasionally punctuated with dread as you recalled the events of that morning.

...Walking back to Seto’s office later that night, you were greeted by Kaoru again, wearing the same black suit he had been wearing earlier that morning, awaiting for your husband’s return in front of his office.

You wondered if the people in this company didn’t sleep or have lives outside of work.

The secretaries were absent again, you also noticed, snickering internally at the thought of how perhaps they were the only employees fortunate enough to escape their boss’s tyranny at the end of the legal work day in this building. Everyone else seemed to just live here.

You didn’t even work for Kaiba and you were living here.

“You look beautiful,” Kaoru offered interrupting your train of thought. You smiled at the compliment, wishing your husband would say such things more often, if ever.

“Thank you, that’s very kind of you to say,” you replied.

“Kind, also not a part of your job description,” you heard a harsh and equally icy voice tear through the vacant hallway, footsteps from a purposeful stride meeting the ground accompanying the voice soon after.

You wouldn’t dispute your husband or comment on his manners in the presence of a stranger. Kaoru merely smiled at the remark.

Entering the office behind your husband, you felt the director’s hand against the small of your back. It wasn’t uncomfortable, just inappropriate given the formality of the situation. You were after all his president’s wife.

The conversation between your husband and the director proceeded as it had the night before, with you reserving yourself to reading some material you had gathered on Wakaetsu Industries on your tablet.

From the corner of your eyes, you registered the director leaving the room.

“We can go home tonight if you want,” Seto offered after Kaoru had left.

“Oh my god, yes!” you exclaimed, jumping to your feet as you gathered your belongings.

He walked back to his desk, picking up the suit jacket draped over the back of his chair, before returning to you and wrapping an arm around your waist as he guided you to the elevator.

“You look beautiful,” he husked against your ear, causing a shiver to ripple down your spine, as you heard again the words from earlier that night.

You weren’t sure what expectations you had spending the night at home, but the reality of the situation disappointed all of it. You had apparently passed out in the car, woken up in a miserable mood as your husband carried you up the stairs, and almost started a fight when he forced you to eat dinner with him when all you wanted to do was go back to sleep.

On a positive note, his embrace seemed to keep the nightmares at bay.
Standing in the lobby of a broadcasting station at the conclusion of your schedule, you were debating with yourself whether you could spare the time to fit lunch in between now and your next meeting when you were greeted by a familiar face.

“What a pleasant surprise meeting you here, Miss,” Kaoru approached you, addressing you by your maiden name, which given the location was somewhat understandable, though you failed to comprehend why he felt the need to address you by it at all.

Returning his usual smile, you bowed politely as you responded.

“I’m an actress and the president of an entertainment agency Mr. Hidehira, if not at a broadcasting station, where else would I be, I feel that should be my question to you, the director of a gaming corporation.”

“Oh please,” he dismissed referring to you by your first name, which wasn’t entirely welcome on your part, “call me Kaoru, and I’m Kaiba Corp.’s marketing director, I’m here on business, promoting.” Seemed like a plausible explanation. “Impressive right? I’m not even thirty yet,” he added light heartedly.

You couldn’t help but laugh at the complete disregard of modesty.

“And my husband’s the president,” you retorted with a smile which bordered on being smug.

“Yes, well, I’ll give you that,” he admitted.

Offering him your farewell greetings, you drove yourself to a nearby restaurant that was only frequented by high profile individuals; celebrities, businessmen, socialites, influencers, etc. As much as you hated the uptight atmosphere, it was close by and offered you some privacy from the prying eyes of the paparazzi.

You must have been seated at a table overlooking the patio for a few moments when a certain director from Kaiba Corp. inquired if he could join you. Unable to refuse, given you had no justifiable reason to, you allowed him.

It would have been a little too paranoid bearing in mind his previous location to consider this meeting anything more than coincidence.

He seemed as if he was pleasant enough company so you weren’t entirely bothered.

The two of you had been conversing about work matters, mainly his, when the topic of conversation turned to your husband.

“You seem as if you are very fond of Mr. Kaiba,” he observed after listening to you speaking of your husband’s sometimes dangerous commitment to the company.

“I am,” you admitted, reserving yourself from adding ‘how could one not be,’ given the incredibly long list of answers that could easily follow.

“That is certainly surprisingly,” he stated, “considering yours was an arranged marriage, and given Mr. Kaiba’s personality...” he trailed off.

That should have raised red flags all around. It didn’t, though you still didn’t appreciate the spiteful undertone he attempted to so very carefully conceal.
“For all intents and purposes, it wasn’t,” you corrected, subtly reminding him of contractual obligations, without being too discourteous. “And, the circumstances under which we met are irrelevant. He is my husband now and I genuinely honour and admire him.”

“I see.” He didn’t seem particularly convinced, and that prompted you to become conscious about whether you had presented your sentiments firmly enough.

At the conclusion of lunch, he – quite aggressively – offered to pay for the both of you and insisted on walking you to your car.

You had politely declined, though he wouldn’t take no for an answer. Somewhat disconcerted by his insistence, you raked your brain unsuccessfully to find a reason to refuse his prolonged company.

Your apprehension of being seen together by inquisitive reporters didn’t seem like a proper reason, as it could have potentially implied ulterior motives or inappropriate sentiments on your side.

In hindsight, you should have maintained your ground.

…

Later that evening, standing in front of your husband’s desk, you found a collection of photographs thrown at you from their confines in a Manila envelope.

You could have worked with livid, this had progressed much beyond that.

“What the hell is this?” Seto barked at you. “I received these from a reporter earlier this afternoon. What on earth possessed you to go on a lunch date with a director of my board? Are you rehearsing for the role of Anna Karenina?”

Chapter End Notes

To anyone that doesn't think Kaiba leaving half way through a meeting to take care of the reader isn't the cutest thing ever...I don't think I can help you child. I'm just kidding, I promise.
Romance With No Strings Attached

Chapter Notes

Obsessively writing on long haul flights part 2.

There will be a part 3 and part 4 to this unhealthy writing habit since I have to take two flights back again next week.

Irrelevant side story: the little old lady next to me on the flight reached over her seat and asked me what I was writing non-stop, and I cracked and told her it was an assignment for school XD. What has my life come to?

Good news then, is that I'll have some more time to write this story, bad news, I have 46 hours worth of flight time ahead of me...again.

Enjoy the drama - all 4669 words of it - and sorry in advance to the poor format and writing in general :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Picking up one of the photographs from the flurry scattered across his desk and the floor surrounding it, your fingers massaged your forehead in thought, scanning over the picture.

This particular one was of him guiding you to your car, hand hovering over the small of your back, though while the photograph portrays him holding you, his careful placement had made it so you hadn’t felt it at the time. There were hundreds more; of the two of you conversing over your meal, walking you to your car, guiding you down the steps of the restaurant; all out of context and yet each extremely convincing, much like the scandal that started your marriage had been.

“Oh my god,” you gasped in horror, “who else has these?”

“No one, I bought all of it,” he responded in a tone which could be dubbed civil, if only considering his current mood.

“Are you sure?” you asked in distress, unable to remove your eyes from the images before you, “these can ruin us.”

“Yes, I’m sure, who do you think I am? And ruin who exactly?” he questioned in a low tone, creating ambiguity that didn’t exist.

“Us! What do you mean who,” you repeated

“Us as is in you and me or you and him?”

You finally tore your gaze up to look at him.

“Seto! How could you ask such a thing?”

“You’re not answering my question,” he firmly demanded.
“Us, you and me, what other us is there to me?”

“These pictures make that very unclear and even less believable,” he accused.

You could understand his sentiments; these pictures were ridiculously believable, even to you. Whoever this photographer was, you needed to hire him for your photoshoots, his manipulation of perspective was incredibly impressive, but you digress, at a very inappropriate and volatile time and situation too, not good. You could comprehend your husband’s concern and grasped clearly the repercussions this could have on your marriage.

"I'm really sorry, it won't happen again," you said after careful consideration of the sensitivity of this complication, walking around to his side of the desk.

"What won't happen?" he bellowed. "What exactly happened?" He demanded to know.

"I met him by chance earlier at DBC, and I went to lunch, on my own, and he showed up again and asked if he could join - "

He let out a dangerously low laugh interrupting you. An unsettling grin settled over his lips.

"You expect me to believe that?" He sneered. "Do you think I was born yesterday?"

"What?" A small voice saddled with disbelief left you. Your eyes widening for a split second before narrowing in utter shock. "Are you accusing me of adultery or infidelity?"

"I know you," he declared, "if you really weren't at fault, you would have slapped me at the accusation, but you're trying to explain yourself instead. What do you think that tells me?"

"Seto!"

"You've been trying to get out of this marriage since it started, is this how you're trying to get my attention about it?"

"How dare you!" You seethed, "I was trying to give you the explanation that you deserved. I was trying to be mature for once because you keep calling me a child, and this is the -"

"Spare me the bullshit," he interjected again cynically.

"Stop this, you're scaring me!"

"Oh? And seeing you out with another man in this context makes me feel how?"

"What context? Were you there? I'm telling you the truth! It was at least on my part a coincidence."

"I see the way he looks at you, and don't think I don't see how you smile at him."

"My god Seto, do you not get tired of listening to anyone but yourself? Nothing happened," you shook, raising your voice, before allowing it to fall hardly above a whisper as you spoke your next words, "I love you, I'm not trying to leave. I have no interest in him."

It wasn't easy standing before this man when he was this incensed. It was terrifying in a way which chilled the soul.

Attempting your best to not be unnerved by his soul shattering glare, you hesitantly reached around his waist, wrapping your arms around him as you held your own gaze towards the ground.
"I love you," you repeated again in a soft voice, "so stop this."

"I turn a blind eye to all the ways you mistreat me," he roared. You could feel his voice reverberate against your temple in his chest. "But I can't let this one go." He reached behind him, unhooking your arms and shoving you roughly away from him.

Regaining your balance as you staggered backwards, indignation burned through you, though with no means of proving yourself, tears pricked at your eyes.

"I wasn't a good wife to you all this time, I admit. And I'm sorry. But this - this is - I didn't - " you were at a loss for words, tears shaking your tone, "I swear."

"Don't think your crying will fool me this time," he shouted, "of all people, a director of my own board, have you no sense? People will talk!"

"I haven't touched him!" You retorted angrily through the tears, "I'm not a committee, there's nothing for anyone to talk about. Whatever you're accusing me of, I haven't done it. I spent that entire conversation talking about you, my husband; about how I admire you, how much I honour you and this is what - " your voice cracked. It cracked in such a painful a way that you couldn't seem to compose yourself to speak again for a few moments.

"You honour me? Don't make me laugh," he snarled.

"I didn't realize you held me with this much contempt," you declared quietly as you recovered.

"If I hated you, or felt nothing at all for that matter, I wouldn't have cared."

"Then -"

"Maybe you need a break from this relationship," he abruptly suggested.

"What?" You could feel a chill burning across the surface of your skin; down your arms and over your shoulder blades. It was a sensation akin to the hair on the back of your neck raising, but all over your body. "No!" You brought your left hand up against your temple, feeling a wave of dizziness sweeping through your head. "What would possess you to say such a thing?" You inquired in agitation, unable to produce a voice louder than a whisper.

It occurred to you in that moment that nothing you said was reaching him, and thus nothing you said would make a difference.

"Is this your solution then? Ultimately?" You finally asked, still holding your head.

"No," he said, "this is what you wanted. I'm giving you what you've been asking for."

You couldn't bear the light headed feeling that was painfully transforming into a headache tearing through your left eye and you reflexively shot your right arm up to his shoulder as you felt your weight falling towards the ground.

His first reaction was to brush your hand off; depriving you of the stability you required to hold yourself up right. You became hyperaware of the pull of gravity in that moment, though you couldn’t recall if you ever reached the ground.

…
Opening your eyes, you were blinded by the brightly lit chandelier on the bedroom ceiling. Immediately casting your now, partially darkened and blinded vision downwards, you noticed the bathroom was also lit, but the silence led you to assume that you were alone.

Forcing yourself up, you folded your knees towards your chest, leaning over it with your arms bent under your face.

You wouldn’t cry. It required you to expend energy you did not have.

Unexpectedly, you heard footsteps approaching from the bathroom.

“You fainted from vasagal syncope. Your blood pressure dropped dangerously, they said from stress.”

His voice conveyed irritation, though it tinged with an apologetic undertone.

“Should I move out of this room now then?” you questioned dismissing him, unable to repress your animosity, referring to his statement about taking a break.

“It’s too early to predict, but you may have conceived again,” he stated, considerably flatly given the consequence of what he was suggesting.

“What?” your head shot up from its place over your knees to look at him. His silence was enough confirmation that you had heard correctly. “I took the pill.”

“You know as well as I do that doesn’t guarantee anything.” Fucking hypocrite. “It’s not a very common possibility, but it can’t be dismissed.”

He sat down facing you, pulling up the grey armchair he usually brought to your bedside.

“Bloody hell,” you breathed, burying your fingers in your hair.

Your delayed cycle was feeding your paranoia.

“If you’re not, we need to get you on birth control,” he informed as if you were some uneducated imbecile.

“Why? So you can force yourself on me whenever you feel like it? And don’t you think I know that?” you exploded, reaching into the drawer of the nightstand and throwing a box of unopened contraceptive pills at him. “It wasn’t safe for me to be on it right after the miscarriage, and just as I healed enough for it to be, you had your way with me again. This is your fault no matter how I –”

You phone on the far end of the nightstand started ringing.

“Pass me my phone.” A cross scowl on his face, he handed you your phone. “Hello?” You paused, irritation boiling in your veins as you heard the pleasant voice on the other end addressing you by your maiden name, which again wouldn’t have bothered you had he not referred to you by “miss.” “I think you need to answer this,” you declared, covering the phone, before extending it towards your husband.

He accepted it, eyes scanning the number across the screen before putting it against his ear.

“Where the hell did you get this number?” he growled, seemingly recognizing the caller without having to hear their voice. “You’re way out of line…You have no business with a married woman…Don’t fuck with me,” he snapped icily, “you have no place calling my wife…Yes, she
was well aware it was you when she handed me the phone, and if I ever see you anywhere near her again, know that I won’t hesitate taking care of business in my own way.”

His voice was a low, dangerous whisper as he hung up on him.

“You gave him your number?” he looked up at you accusingly.

“NO! Why the hell would I? Is that what that he said? Do you not have guards that watch my every move? Ask one of them.”

“I don’t spy on you, despite what you may think.”

You found that hard to believe.

“How did he make it that far up the ladder anyway?” you inquired, suddenly curious.

“He’s from a fairly influential family, though I wouldn’t have allowed him that far up, was it not for his own merits.”

“So he’s capable?”

“Why do you care?” he barked.

That was your limit.

“Do you think,” you paused, “that I hold my morals so loosely, that I sleep around with every handsome, influential man I see? If that was the case, then why was I a virgin when I married you, answer me that Kaiba! You said you knew of all my personal relationships. You said you knew that I’ve had none, explain that.”

You only used his last name when you were incensed, and he was well aware of this fact.

“If there is a possibility you’re pregnant again, you shouldn’t get so worked up,” he sighed, obviously avoiding the question. “We should take better care this time.”

“Fuck. That. I’m just content you’re not accusing it to be some other man’s child,” you fumed in retaliation.

“What do you want, an apology?” he inquired coldly, narrowing his eyes.

“Yes, actually, several if it can be helped.”

“It cannot,” he stated firmly, “but I will apologize for doubting your faithfulness to me.”

“Your words were a disgrace to my character,” you spat.

“I’m aware.”

“Your petty apology won’t erase that!”

“Petty?” he growled, eyes falling back to their narrowed gaze.

“You can’t strip a woman of her honour and hope for one word to erase it. I’m not sure what sort of women you’ve been with before me, but I am your equal and one apology will not appease me the way they would some commoner, understand that,” you raged, before slipping back under the sheets and turning away from him before he could respond. You raised your arms and clapped the
lights off, leaving him in the dark, while you squeezed your own eyes shut to escape it.

You heard him turning the switch of your night lamp on before hearing the wooden legs of the chair scraping against the marble as he dragged it away.

You were pleasantly surprised that he hadn’t disputed any part of your statement.

Those feelings of, triumph, if you could call it that, lasted a few seconds before you saw his shadow, towering over your bedside.

“What?”

“Remove your makeup before you sleep, you’re already breaking out.”

Asshole. Yes, I own a mirror; I can see that I am.

His resolve outlasted yours as you finally snapped under the steel gaze he firmly held against your back and throwing the covers off you, pushed past him towards the bathroom.

At least he had had the courtesy to change you into your nightgown.

Returning from the bathroom, he was on his side of the bed, intently typing on his laptop.
Climbing into bed, you ignored him and he ignored you.

You couldn’t be sure after how long, but you were roused by the sensation of pressure against your stomach, as you were pulled back against something firm. His head leaning on the back of your neck was the last thing your conscious mind registered before drifting back to sleep.

…

As one can imagine, given the terms the two of you had gone to bed on the night prior, saying that the next morning was awkward and uncomfortable would have be an understatement.

Of course, it didn't help that you had woken up to find your head nestled in the crook of his neck; under his chin, face pressed against him. At first, your mind, that was still slowly recalling the events of the previous day, afforded you the blissful forgetfulness that led you to nuzzle yourself further up against the bare skin of his neck.

A few moments passed, before memory washed over you, mortification immediately following.

You could tell by the way the tendons of his arms were moving against your shoulders, that he was likely typing something on his phone. You could also tell by the way his arms stiffened, almost as if to cage you in place, that he knew you were awake too.

Motioning to get up, out of his grasp, his arms tightened even more, purposefully restraining you. You couldn't be sure however if you were overthinking the situation - perhaps he assumed you were still asleep and having a bad dream - so you pulled away more forcefully, in the process, accidentally making eye contact with him as you tilted your head up. Blue eyes flickered over yours nonchalantly, before assuming their previous position; gazing into the distance above your head.

You held your pride too dearly to talk to him, so instead, you opted to thrash around against his embrace in hopes of becoming too much of a nuisance to the occupied CEO.

"Stop that," he hissed in his raspy morning voice. "You're too old to be throwing a tantrum first
thing in the morning," he added when you refused to listen, as he continued his work, almost undisturbed, and entirely unaffected by your efforts to break free.

You spent what felt like the next eternity, seething in his embrace, until finally a phone call - which at first he insisted on answering in that same position - forced his attentions elsewhere.

The rest of the morning he reserved himself to ignoring you again and while it severely irritated you, you wouldn’t acknowledge it and you very strongly refused to address it.

...

You were carefully amending the contracts for the members of the new girl group you were preparing to debut at the end of the quarter, and following the hot-mess-circus on wheels that was the previous generation boy group’s dramatic departure which violated their contracts, and the nerve gratingly ambiguous clauses of their agreement which had made the resulting legal trial – that was annoyingly enough, still on-going – so preposterously gruelling, you were determined to write a legal contract that would end all legal contracts. Of course the aforementioned contract for the boy group was written before you had assumed your role as CEO and now that you were the head of this organization, you wouldn’t allow the incompetency of your legal team monkeys with a combined IQ that still fail to measure up to yours, to write a similar one that would screw you over for yet another round of this ridiculous jig.

Long story short, you were so invested in your paperwork when the phone rang, that had you been anymore engrossed, you probably wouldn’t have even answered it.

You greeted whoever was on the other end distractedly, lacking the attention span to check the caller ID.

The first few dialogues of the conversation were exchanged with you paying no attention to the caller, responding with answers which were beyond nonsensical to the questions being asked.

You only snapped out of your trance like state when your husband basically growled your name at an ear shattering pitch, in exasperation.

“Are you still ignoring me from last night?” you heard him ask. “You’re being childish.”

“What? No, I was reading something, what do you need?” You hoped your tone conveyed your sincerity.

“Do you have any meetings or schedules between one and two this afternoon?”

“No – I don’t think so,” you began to say while checking your laptop when your secretary appeared at the door and your eyes shifted up to acknowledge her. “Hold on,” you advised your husband, hand covering the receiver as you addressed the petite woman at the door, “Yes?”

“There’s an Arisa here to see you?” she informed you.

That was by far one of the vaguest things she’s ever said to you.

“Who?” your expression contorted as your mind failed to assign any significance to that name.

“A trainee, she said you scouted her yourself.”

What did this kid take you for? You shook your head lightly, somewhat humoured.
"We have five—over five hundred trainees in our roaster, in this building alone, you can’t possibly expect me to know them all by first name basis. You need to be more specific," you advised, and your secretary disappeared behind the door. You put the receiver back against your ear. "Yes, I have time around then, why?"

"Get here as soon as you’re done dealing with whatever it is you’re doing now, and wear the engagement ring I gave you," he ordered.

"Seto, I have a meeting in half an hour," you disputed, checking the blue crystal watch tied around your wrist to see that it was already eleven, "I can come after that."

"Fine," he snarled.

"I’ll see you later then?" you offered.

"I better."

You sighed as he disconnected the line, putting any sensitive information of your desk out of sight as a young girl, possibly a couple of years younger than you walked through the door following your instruction to your secretary.

Seto called again halfway through your conversation with Arisa, asking what your dress size was, and while you thought it strange, he wouldn’t offer you any further clarification as you advised him your size.

"Is that your boyfriend?" the trainee inquired with practically stars in her eyes, an eager curiosity oozing out of her tone in way that reminded you of Mokuba, "I’m so envious," she gushed.

You shifted your eyes to her from the phone, a smirk tugging at your lips.

She was here pleading to be considered for the new girl group despite having been with the company for less than a year. She had courage; you would give her that, seeking out the company president to secure a spot.

"Flattery will get you nowhere in this office kid, though if you genuinely feel that way, I appreciate the sentiment."

…

The unexpected meeting with Arisa, and the following half an hour meeting which extended to well beyond an hour and a half, left Seto to storm in to your company looking for you. Thankfully, you ran into him in the lobby instead of missing each other.

"Well at least you’re wearing blue," he commented when he saw you, as he appraised your knee length, light blue Fendi dress with cascading ribbon detailing around the waist and all over jewel embellishments. Lifting your left hand to confirm your ring was indeed on your finger, his gaze shifted towards your heels, a black pair of pointed, Jimmy Choo stilettos, with sheer socks worn under it, and reaching just above your ankle; the socks reaching a different height on each leg as the soft fabric gathered down.

"Did you not see me this morning getting dressed?" you asked slightly annoyed as he reached into the pocket of his muted silver suit jacket.

"You change outfits like three times during a work day, I couldn’t be sure."
You couldn’t dispute that.

“Is there an occasion or something?” you inquired, eyes narrowing in confusion as he produced a navy, velvet box.

Opening it, he pulled out with one hand a dainty white gold necklace, with a silver, oriental inspired dragon with wings, curving over a sizable, light blue diamond.

You never fancied that such a design could look so elegant without bearing even a hint of tackiness.

Your mouth all but fell open at its beauty, eyebrow slightly raising as your eyes travelled up to meet his gaze, pondering how to suitably word all the questions that were bustling in your head.

Sweeping the stray strands that had escaped your voluminous braid to join it over your right shoulder; he stepped behind you, a scowl firmly etched over his face. A shiver ran the course of your body as his fingers ever so slightly brushed along the back of your neck.

He brought his arms over your head, the diamond catching the sunlight which poured in from the glass walls of the lobby as it passed over your eyes, before bringing the clasp of the ethereal necklace behind your neck.

By this point, your employees were moving slower through the lobby than usual, inquisitively observing the spectacle, whispering amongst themselves, while attempting to conceal their wonderment and curious stares.

“Seto, can we do this in my office?” you whispered, “people are watching.”

“Let them,” he spoke dismissively, focusing on securing the clasp. “I don’t see why you insist on hiding away from the public.”

Alright, fair point.

“Where are we going?” you probed, changing the subject, desperately craving answers as you hoped a question so blunt that it was practically impossible to avoid would make it difficult for him to skillfully dance around.

“That’s for you to find out.”

…

Having long given up your quest for answers as you were constantly met with dead ends, you reserved yourself to admiring the pendant. Adjusting the mirror above you on the passenger’s side of the car, you stared in awe at the exquisiteness of the necklace. The intricate pendant complimented perfectly, the shallow ‘v’ neckline of the blue dress, which extended from the long thin straps, all the way down to the raised waistline below your bust; the curved tail of the dragon drawing the eye down the chest towards the angle of the neck.

“It’s beautiful Seto,” you cooed, fingers tracing along the pendant, the wings of which were nestled between your collarbones, “thank you, where did you get this? And… what’s the occasion?” you inquired, skepticism tainting your latter words.

“I didn’t get it, it was hand carved by a designer specifically to fit you.”

“You had this made for me?” you asked in absolute astonishment. “Why?”
“It was meant to be an engagement present, though it took longer than initially planned. *Artists.*” He explained plainly, literally snarling at the word ‘artist.’

“I’m an artist,” you countered.

“Yes, well,” he vaguely glossed over your words, “It certainly looks better on you than sitting in the box.” The trace of a smile which appeared across his lips conveyed he was impressed of himself. “And it looked pretty damn good sitting in the box,” he added smugly, eyes looking ahead at the road.

You were definitely missing something. This spontaneous romantic gesture contradicted his entire character and basically what the man stood for, and yet so far, the fine print was eluding you. Though then again, you reminded yourself, you were still completely unaware of where exactly your destination was.

Seto parked in the front garden of what appeared to be a traditional Japanese restaurant, the white gravel walkways winding through the perfectly trimmed bonsai hedges of pink and lush green, leading up to the steps of the old fashioned building.

He led you by the arm to the reception, informing the girl behind the counter of the reservations before guiding you through the hallways lined with tall, wood and rice-paper sliding doors.

Walking up to the ornate wooden doors at the far end of the corridor, Seto abruptly stopped, turning you to face him by wrapping his hands over your shoulders and bare upper arms. You looked up at him perplexed, as he quite carefully, fixed the positioning of the carved stone and metal pendant, eyes intently focusing as his fingers moved it to the exact spot on your chest he deemed fit.

As his eyes met yours, reaching around to the back of your neck, shifting the clasp of the necklace, you were certain he was scheming.

The curiosity and unconcealed confusion in your eyes persisted as you turned towards the door once more before he spun you to face him again, studying you over. You almost brought yourself to ask him what was causing him to act this way when he without warning reached his hand towards the empress waistline of the dress, tugging it down slightly so that it sat exactly where it was intended to, revealing a tasteful amount of cleavage, before gently sliding your strap inwards with one finger to lay over the edge of your protruding collar bone so that it matched the other.

Disconcerted by this uncharacteristic tenderness conveyed through this sudden attention to detail in your presentation, you could feel a shiver run the course of your body for the second time that afternoon, hair raising all over your body. Had you not known the man better, you would have almost been touched.

“I want my woman to look her best,” he explained, reading your mind as he usually did. You knew him better. “Behind these doors are executives of a Korean department store and retail conglomerate. We are discussing the final stages of launching the new video game across Korea on the same release date as here in Japan,”

Seemed reasonable enough, though you failed to understand why he insisted on your attendance.

Offering you his arm, which you hesitantly took, he opened the doors as he led you in.

Seeing a particularly young and handsome director amongst the group of unfamiliar, older gentlemen sitting around the traditionally carved wooden table, the disorderly puzzle pieces
immediately fell together.

The pendant around your neck was obviously a symbol of possession, similar in principle to a family crest.

Seto Kaiba wasn’t some hopeless romantic, if you wanted romance with no strings attached, you should have read a book.

Chapter End Notes

For anyone that was confused about the shoes: https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/b3/32/9e/b3329e02a988eef25f3bc680da9b5977.jpg

*DBC refers to Domino Broadcasting Station here.

*Arisa is just a character that served the purpose of a background character, she serves no purpose in the actual plot and you probably will not even see her again, just a little peace of mind for all you theorists.
Chapter Notes

This chapter is a little shorter.

All dialogues that are italicized are in Korean, it just became redundant for me to keep writing which language was being spoken.

I tried my best to keep the Korean dialogues as authentic as possible, that is, translating them directly from how they would be spoken in the actual language but then again, here I am writing an entire story about a Japanese couple, and I don't speak a word of Japanese so who how relevant and accurate have things even been?

Enjoy!

Side note: There's so much plot left and you all want fluff in the middle too, I'm looking at another twenty chapters + T_T

With this new clarity his last minute statement had afforded you, a sudden feeling of uncomfortableness swept over you. You weren’t a possession to be paraded with.

Your arm still around your husband, your eyes remained helplessly locked with the young director until they were forcefully called to acknowledge the older gentlemen who introduced himself as president Hwang, the CEO of the retail conglomerate that your husband was discussing a partnership with.

“I didn’t realise the president of Kodama Corporation would be joining us,” he began in Korean with a pleasant smile, before a young woman in a business suit who you assumed was his secretary whispered something in his ear. “Really?” he asked her curiously before turning to face you again, “Or should I be addressing you as the future Mrs. Kaiba?” he inquired.

“Even following the marriage, she won’t lose her title as president simply because she becomes my wife,” Seto interjected, a civil tone to his words, “so both are equally acceptable.”

“That is true,” president Hwang agreed, “It’s a pleasure to meet you for the first time”

You simply bowed your head with a small smile, accepting his greeting.

Sitting amongst all these smartly dressed businessmen, as expensive as your attire was – not to say that you were underdressed – you felt your choice of clothing was rather quirky, and better suited for sitting in the front row of a runway show in Milan or Paris rather than at a corporate luncheon. It would have perhaps helped had Seto been wearing one of his trench coats instead of a full on suit. You felt your current attire didn’t do much to bridge the jarring age gap already present between you and the men, rather perpetuating the contrast.

The seating arrangement was all sorts of informal and poorly decided. You were unfortunately subjected to sit across from Kaoru, while Seto was facing the Korean president, who was sitting to the left of Kaoru. A few relevant members of both Seto and president Hwang’s director board were
seated around the table, with a rather obnoxious looking Korean executive to your left.

You could tell your husband was displeased with the arrangement and yet given you had been the last to arrive; he didn’t have the liberty to do much about the disorderly seating that everyone had so thoughtlessly helped themselves to at that point. As arrogant and authoritative as he was, surely even he would not want to reveal discord in his court at such a crucial meeting.

The greater portion of the first part of the meal was spent with the two CEOs discussing the general terms of the deal, with you reserving yourself to silence while desperately attempting to evade Kaoru’s gaze, which seemed to follow yours like a rabid dog.

You had also gathered that the aforementioned director’s Korean wasn’t very fluent, given he occasionally resorted to listening to the translator seated next to him, though then again, most of Seto’s executives heavily relied on a translator.

“It must be difficult for you without a translator,” he extended his concern while your husband was too occupied in conversation.

*My brain is my translator, twat.*

You diverted your eyes from watching the two conversing presidents to him.

“I’m perfectly comfortable,” you dismissed vaguely, not wishing to make more conversation than necessary.

This short side conversation drew your husband’s attention, followed shortly by president Hwang’s.

“*Had I known Mr. Kaiba would be bringing his future wife, I would have brought mine,*” he smiled at you, “*Though given your background; I would assume you’re not entirely lost as my wife would have been. Though perhaps, I should bring my daughter to the next meeting. I don’t know if you mind me asking, how old are you?*”

His translator began to interpret when you politely spoke over her.

“I’ll accept your consideration with much appreciation.” you responded fluently, much to the visible shock of many of the executives of both companies, especially Kaoru’s. “*I don’t mind, I’m twenty one this year, though by Korean age I would be twenty two.*”

“You speak the language very well,” he complimented. You shook your head politely, insisting against it for formality’s sake. “*You’re a year younger than my youngest daughter; I will bring her to the next meeting. Mr. Kaiba, you must be sure to bring her along again.*”

“Of course,” Seto agreed stoically.

“I must offer my congratulations to the both of you,” the older president continued, “I was acquainted with your grandfather. I can’t think of a more suitable family to join the Kaibas.”

“Thank you,” you spoke, more intrigued by his acquaintance with your late grandfather. “*You knew my grandfather? If I’m not distracting too much from the topic at hand,*” you looked over at Seto cautiously, proceeding at his silence which you took as permission to continue, “*What was he like?*”

“A man who commanded a lot of respect,” he laughed heartily, “*A very intelligent and forward thinking person too, given Kodama was one of the first corporations in the continent to develop*
"AI."

"AI?"

“Yes, your company developed the earliest generations of those technologies back in the early seventies, though not everyone within the organization agreed to its application, as I’m sure you know.”

There were no such records.

“Yes,” you lied, not wanting to display incompetence regarding your own company history. “Yes, there certainly was much discord,” you added vaguely, hoping to draw out some more information.

“A man needs to have a strong sense of morality. Indeed, though I understand president Wakamura is doing well with his own corporation now.”

This raised an eyebrow. This man seemed to be an impartial wealth of information you couldn’t hope to access to its full potential, so as to not reveal your lack of knowledge.

If his words were true, what this did inform you was that Tetsuo Wakamura had left the corporation in the late seventies as a result of disagreement in how artificial intelligence was to be applied, likely due to differences in moral perspective. If nothing else, you now had better confirmation that your attacker was indeed him.

You could see Seto’s scowl growing increasingly deeper. Likely taking this as a cue, one of president Hwang’s board directors interjected, steering the topic of conversation so sharply off its current course that you were left beyond irritated.

“President, you should be focusing on the future of the young couple, not be giving some bleak history lesson.” The middle aged, spectacled man with narrow eyes who seemed to be cold and calculating declared. “Can we look forward to an heir for the Kaiba Corporation coming along soon then, or perhaps more since Kodama will be needing one too?”

His seedy grin was unsettling as he pushed up his glasses with his middle finger. Your breath hitched in your throat momentarily and you felt Seto’s hand landing over your thigh, squeezing gently in reassurance.

You unconsciously placed your hand against your stomach, and this motion unbeknownst to you did not go unnoticed by Seto. Lifting your eyes, your gaze met with the young director sitting across from you, seemingly displeased with the conversation, and they continued to linger over him for a moment longer before shifting to meet the executive who had spoken.

“Of course,” you agreed with a deceitfully genuine looking smile before your husband could speak, “of course we need to have children as soon as we are married,” you added brightly, placing a hand over Seto’s upper arm. You could feel him stiffening at the touch.

From your peripheral, you observed Kaoru’s scowl contorting to such an extent it could have almost rivalled your husband’s.

Seto’s grip over your thigh loosened at your seemingly unfazed reaction, though his hand remained in place.

“Please Jung JinSang,” president Hwang disagreed with his director –while you desperately suppressed the urge to not laugh at the name, earning you a glare from Seto, though there was no
way he was unaware of the double meaning of that name. You couldn’t dismiss how fitting the name was for that man. “These two are still young, don’t take away their youth. Unlike you, they aren’t getting married past forty, there’s no rush,” the jovial president added. “Don’t listen to him,” he advised you, “I can’t imagine my youngest giving me grandchildren and she’s older than you. Have some sense,” he scolded his subordinate with his latter sentence.

“Ah yes, I’m sorry,” the man bowed.

Seto muttered something which dismissed their concerns and the lunch continued.

The matters being discussed didn’t pertain to you for the greater part, and you were once again subjected to a siege of uninvited glances from the director sitting across the table.

Dessert was not pre-set as the previous courses had been and allowed the guests to choose from a short menu.

“I think the pomelo panna cotta would be an excellent choice for Miss,” Kaoru abruptly offered, addressing you by your name as you scanned the gold embossed menu card. It was unnecessary and incredibly bold considering your husband was sitting right next to you.

The obvious transgression in how he addressed you went clearly unnoticed by the Korean executives as to them, you were yet to adopt Seto’s last name. It did not fail to raise eyebrows of the Japanese directors however, who were fully aware of Seto’s relationship with you.

“You seem very close to the president’s fiancé,” CEO Hwang observed.

“She’s allergic,” Seto harshly interjected in Japanese looking at Kaoru, “and she can decide for herself.”

You couldn’t begin to guess how he was aware of such an obscure detail. You were certain your allergy to pomelo was not on your medical record.

“I’ll go for the matcha and passionfruit entremet cake,” you decided quietly, turning to the waitress in the fuchsia kimono.

“You don’t like matcha,” Seto questioned, slightly leaning into you.

“No, but my only other option is Grapefruit Pomegranate Champagne Sorbet, and I rather not risk it, given the possibility of – you know,” you added the last part in a whisper.

This interaction did not go unseen by any of the executives around the table. It inspired feelings of resentment in a certain individual.

Seto released a low, guttural hum in acknowledgement of your decision.

The lunch was primary a formality to open up the formal discussions of the agreement, though if the present ambience was any indication, the prospects of a promising partnership seemed very possible.

Following the meal, you were standing on the porch of the restaurant, waiting for Seto to join you after sending off the Korean party.

Sensing the presence of someone beside you, you turned to be faced with exactly who you had
“I hope you didn’t find lunch too unpleasant,” Kaoru extended in greeting.

“Quite the contrary,” you responded briefly, anxious about being seen together with him by Seto, though you thought it improper to suddenly leave.

“I called you last night,” he continued.

“Yes I know, I answered remember?”

“I called you,” he repeated, “because there’s something I must ask you.”

“What would that be?” you questioned apprehensively.

“I quite enjoyed lunch yesterday with you,” he declared impudently, disregarding your husband’s warning. Nerves rolled over in your stomach as you recalled your husband’s reaction earlier the day prior. “And I was wondering if you would be interested in seeing me for tea.”

“I’m married Mr. Hidehira,” you reminded him sternly, flashing your engagement ring at him, “and I think it would serve you well to heed my husband’s words carefully.”

“Are you afraid of Mr. Kaiba?” he inquired obnoxiously.

“I respect him, that’s quite different from fear.”

“Yes, well that’s also quite different from love,” he drawled, interrupting you, “I think it’s unfair that you of all people, the symbol of romance and beauty to the youth of this country is stuck in a loveless arranged marriage.”

The audacity of this man to so freely discuss a subject he was so entirely unaware of. Had he been unattractive and not so frustratingly charming in his mannerisms, you possibly would have treated him with more open animosity.

“I think my personal feelings towards my husband are not something appropriate for me to discuss with you,” you deflected politely.

“So you’re not denying it then?”

“Denying what?” you asked furrowing your brows, bemused.

“That you don’t regard him with affection.”

“No, I’m stating that is not an answer I owe you Mr.Hidehira.”

“Same difference.”

“Excuse me,” you finally said, walking down the worn wooden steps into the garden, towards your husband.

Your struggles however were far from over, as Kaoru pursued you down the gravel path, forcefully wrapping your arm around his.

“Let go,” you protested under your breath, “this is hardly appropriate.”

Given the setting, you did not want to draw attention to the situation, but you also dreaded what
your husband would think. As you subtly attempted to wrestle out of the director’s grip, you could feel his warm breath against the side of your neck as he leaned in too close. You could smell the scent of his oddly attractive cologne.

You knew the other directors would talk if this continued.

Seto turned around at the sound of the gravel under your feet, and you could see his eyes narrow. He turned back almost immediately, focusing his attention back to the president in front of him for a moment before spinning on his heel to walk towards you.

Finally managing to break away from the hold, you all but leaped at Seto, snaking your arms around his as you moved your head to be inches from his chest as you spoke your next words.

“I’ll sleep with you whenever you want, just please overlook this without yelling at me here,” you pleaded to your husband extremely fast in a hushed whisper.

“Go wait in the car,” he advised under his breath ominously, as he pulled out the keys from his breast pocket and unlocked the doors. You obeyed, walking past him.

Fuck.

…

Seto looked at Kaoru with a glare – the other directors were out of earshot.

“Touch my wife again, and I will snap your neck. Do you understand?” he threatened in a dangerous growl, “she might tolerate your advances, but I don’t. Never have and never will. If you think you and your family can come close to the influence of the Kaiba’s, you have another thing coming. Touch one, and see what happens to your entire family tree.”

The slightly shorter man was quite obvious shaken, though he tried his best not to display it openly.

Men did the strangest things for love, and stupider things for infatuation.

Chapter End Notes

* Jinsang in Korean loosely refers to busybody or jerk, for a lack of better term, for anyone who was confused by the reference. *Not a direct translation, I can't seem to find the right word for it in English* but you get the idea.
I'm sure some people will be happy about this chapter, and those who read the title probably won't be, we'll see, I don't know.

So again, from the title, this original chapter was broken into two, because it just kept going and going, to something like 9 or 10,000 words and I wasn't having it so anyway. Ignore the ominous title and enjoy :)

*Edit, this chapter was originally intended to be part one of two, but after revising the next, 22 page chapter, it no longer carries the same theme so the title doesn't fit and carry over, so ignore my ramblings :)

“Are you mad?” you asked cautiously, biting your bottom lip out of nervous habit as you placed your right hand over his thigh, watching him fasten his seat belt.

“You’re being distracting,” he muttered, eyes motioning towards your hand as he reversed out of the parking space.

In all the time that you had known him, never had you expected passive aggression from Seto Kaiba.

“Are you?” you pushed.

“We’ll talk at home. Remove your hand,” he ordered as he continued to keep his eyes fixed on the road ahead.

“I have to get back to work,” you refused.

“It’s Sunday.”

“Has that ever stopped you before?”

Probably not the best to argue with the man considering the current situation, but your habits overtook your judgement.

“We need to talk,” he repeated, more sternly. His tone was increasingly more ominous. “Remove your hand.” His eyes momentarily narrowed as they flickered over your hand, stubbornly placed over his thigh.

You tightened your grip in defiance, letting go now, you felt would symbolize much more distance; an axe of sorts being driven into the relationship.

“I’ll work from home,” you stated in compromise, “Let me go pick up the contracts I need to review.”
He didn’t object to your hand on his leg after that.

…

“I think I need an office set up somewhere in the mansion,” you insisted as you followed him up the stairs leading to the third floor.

“You can work from the study.” His tone was dry and displeased, though not at the subject at hand.

“That’s where you work,” you questioned.

“Is there a principle that two people can’t work in there at the same time?” he retorted sharper than you thought necessary as he looked over his shoulder at you with an eyebrow raised in challenge.

Yours rose in reaction, intrigued – or rather quite surprised - that he was allowing you into his study considering Mokuba had made it very clear that the room was off limits, sometimes even to him.

“You- my presence won’t be a disturbance – to you?” you asked cautiously.

“If it were, this marriage wouldn’t be standing.”

Was that a back handed compliment or an outright insult? You couldn’t be sure.

One thing you were certain of however was how unsettling you found his contained aggression. It was borderline frightening as you couldn’t gage the extent of the anger that was lurking beneath the murky surface.

Seto tore off suit jacket off his shoulders before he even reached the bedroom door, draping it over his forearm before roughly cranking the door handle downwards.

Walking in behind him as if you were stepping on a thinly laid out film of egg shells, you watched him discard his belt to join the tie and suit jacket already sprawled across the bed.

Facing away from you, he untucked his shirt, starting to unbutton it.

Stepping out of your heels, you slowly sat on the bed next to him, facing him. His shirt hanging open, he turned to face you.

“Your conduct was most inappropriate,” he began in a tone that was far from his usual tone of displeasure, as he looked down at you.

You forced your eyes shut for a moment before looking away at the wall as you drew in a nervous breath.

“Look at me when I’m speaking to you,” he demanded, and you shifted your eyes up, defiance stubbornly persisting in your eyes. You had meant to look subservient, but clearly that wasn’t an expression you were capable of teaching your facial muscles at such short notice after years of being domineering.

Your eyes flicked back towards the floor the moment they met Seto’s glare.

“I have no excuses,” you admitted.

“You’re the wife of the most respected corporate president in this country, act the part. I married you believing we would have an understanding given your background. Don’t play the victim
when I know you can help yourself,” he barked, his severe tone unrelenting. “Handle yourself better.”

“I didn’t want to draw attention to myself.”

“I find it hard to believe that you’ve never had the occasion to deflect unwanted male attention before.”

“He’s relentless,” you defended.

“You’re too soft,” he spat narrowing his eyes.

“Yes, I suppose that’s how I ended up in the marriage.”

That’s not the direction you had meant to steer this conversation.

“Say that again,” he challenged, his voice straining to a raspy whisper.

Your brain screamed at you to take action to salvage this conversation and by extension this marriage that was quickly going to hell.

Directing your gaze at the ground so as to not be unnerved by the look in his eye, you stood up, stepping to stand in front of him.

Your eyes lifted to fall against his chest, as you timidly moved your hands to slip his open shirt past his broad shoulders. He stiffened very slightly, as he allowed the white fabric to fall softly to the ground behind him.

You could feel your chest tightening in anxiety, as you raised yourself on your toes to meet his lips. You had gravely miscalculated his height, especially when you were standing before him barefoot – your net socks didn’t do much in adding to your height.

His hands landed over your waist, almost entirely encompassing it as he supported your unstable stance, but he wouldn’t lean down to close the gap.

Unwillingly, you looked up at him. His head was tilted to the side, lips inches away from yours.

“I won’t allow you to seduce me out of my opinion every time I say something you don’t like hearing,” he asserted in a rough voice. “And don’t look at me with those eyes, they won’t work this time.”

You weren’t aware you were looking at him in a certain way.

He had deflected your attempts at appeasing him and yet he wouldn’t release you, even as you placed your heels back on the ground.

“What did he tell you?” he husked in your ear as you insisted on keeping your gaze cast downwards.

“He -” you faltered as you considered what was appropriate to tell your husband of what your admirer had said.

“Everything,” he husked, “I need to know everything he said to my wife behind my back.”

You took a deep breath, feeling him leaning into you.
“He asked if I would be interested in having tea with him. He thinks it’s a waste for me to be bound unhappily in a loveless arranged marriage. I suppose he thinks he can help that.”

“And are you? Do you feel this marriage is loveless? Are you unhappy?”

Those words spoken by another man would have conveyed some degree of insecurity, and yet coming from Seto Kaiba, it just sounded threateningly confrontational.

You shook your head, still focusing your gaze on the floor.

“No.”

“I didn’t realize you regarded the arrangement so plainly.”

“What?” Your head shot up inadvertently to face him at the unexpected response.

“I recall asking you three questions. You answered with a two letter response.”

_Fuck. He was testing you._ Should have known. Time to back pedal – wait, no, fuck it you weren’t beneath him.

Perhaps the crack had already started forming.

“You asked me a question and I answered in the most concise way I knew how,” you explained, not in the mood to defend yourself or cower any further. “I may have handled the situation in a manner which was lacking, but I certainly wasn’t unfaithful to you. I’ll make a note to myself to carry myself in a way that befits the most _respected_ CEO on this side of planet earth, now excuse me so that I can run my own _multi-billion dollar_ corporation.” And with that you pushed past him, immitating his tone with your last words. His hands had fallen away from your waist half way through your rather unpretty fit. You took a few more steps forward before reluctantly turning back. “Where’s the study exactly?” you asked hesitantly.

He looked over his shoulder at you as if you were some sort of idiot, before walking past you and out the door in his partial state of undress.

...  

“There’s only one desk,” you noted as you regarded the vast room lined with book cases stretching to the ceiling, a dark oak desk with single line of muted brass studs decorating along the rectangular sides, as it sat against the far window, bathed in afternoon sunlight, with a dusky maroon leather chair positioned behind it.

“We share one bed,” he stated quite flatly, before turning on his heel leaving the room.

You allowed yourself a moment to process that remark before settling yourself into the space.

The large, armed leather chair basically consumed you, and you didn’t really have any concept for the many stacks of paper your husband had neatly piled across his desk.

Luckily for you, as you considered where you should set down your laptop, and your own collection of papers, he appeared in the doorway behind a man dressed similar to the mansion’s butler. The unfamiliar man was carrying another wheeled leather chair, which he set down in front
of the desk as you assumed he had been instructed.

He walked past your husband, who was now in a light grey button up over back slacks, bowing.

Seto dragged the chair around the desk to situate it next to you as he quickly sorted the various piles of papers into the many drawers, and the left over ones into a neat pile on the corner of the desk.

He reached behind and drew the curtains over the large window, drowning the room in darkness before leaning across in front of you to reach the antique, dark green desk lamp with a gold trim around the edge of the shade, turning it on.

He sat back nonchalantly, a blank expression on his face, as he opened his own laptop you hadn’t noticed he was carrying and beginning to work.

You followed suit, neither exchanging a word with the other.

The desk was fairly large, you wouldn’t disagree, but it was by no means suitable to adequately hold the both of you. You had learned over the past hour that both of you shared the messy habit of sprawling out your paperwork across your entire workspace. You were sure he had noticed this similarity also, despite him not vocalizing his observations.

Though, it wasn’t until you read the letterhead consisting of the Kaiba Corp. corporate design, after absentmindedly scrawling your signature along the bottom of the contract that you realized the extent of the issue.

You looked over to where you had picked up the faux-leather navy file which had contained the contract to realize your one had been sitting under it.

Seeing your husband reaching distractedly towards your binder, your hand shot out to grab his, as you apologetically handed him the one you were currently holding, as he looked over at you with confusion.

“Sorry,” you bit your lip.

“If you signed your name with Kaiba, this wouldn’t be an issue,” he grumbled, as he appraised the document you had botched.

“Get me another desk?” you suggested as you watched him scowling over the paper.

“That’ll cram the space of the room.”

Bullshit, the room could hold a bloody duelling arena.

“Alright, let me set up my own study.”

“No.”

What the hell.

You stared at him in disbelief. Ninety rooms and he wouldn’t allow you to have your own workspace. No, instead he insisted on you being huddled right next to him and having your paperwork mixed up. Next thing you know, you were approving a hundred million dollar project for virtual reality because you had assumed it was an acquisition deal for a record label you were taking over.

You were actually surprised he hadn’t lost his mind at you for ruining – from what you had
managed to gather after briefly scanning the document – a contract for an overseas partnership with
China for simulator pods.

“Seto –”

“What?” he asked in a tone that was far from gentle, not bothering to look at you.

“Never mind,” you sighed, as you submitted yourself to actually being productive in the cramped
workspace.

You weren’t sure why he was so adamant about this arrangement when you were sure it was
uncomfortable to him also, but you didn’t have the patience to investigate, as it really would just
result in a redundant argument about personal space, how you regarded each other and what have
you.

The whole affair was awkward as the unfinished conversation that was of critical importance to the
relationship hung above the both of you, though your husband seemed unbothered by it, and to you
at least, what the two of you were currently doing felt like a desperate attempt to focus on
everything in your life but the actual issue driving a stake through your relationship.

Your bid to work in the study had been an effort to escape him, not be in his company for this
extensive a period of time in such close proximity. Your current situation had the exact opposite
effect of what you had intended. Though in hindsight, maybe you shouldn’t have elected to be in
the one place the man spent majority of his time at home outside of the bedroom.

Again, it didn’t help that your husband was the absolute, all time master of poker faces. The man’s
ability of remaining impassive at times like this drew you to the edge of sanity.

You could hardly discern if the writing in front of you was in Latin or ancient French as you
hopelessly tried to focus your attention on the contract that was actually written in plain English.
Meanwhile, your husband typed uninterruptedly, completely composed, seemingly never making a
mistake or faltering. The unending sound of fingers swiftly hitting keys would be the thing to push
you over the edge, if his stoic mask didn’t.

You almost brought yourself to say something that would resume the conversation you had chosen
to walk out of, but each time your gaze fell over his stony countenance; your resolve would betray
you.

“Seto,” you had begun to say when a maid appeared in the doorway and announced that dinner was
ready to be served.

Disregarding your address, your husband had wordlessly risen from his seat, slipped his hand
through yours and pulled you along behind him to where you assumed would be the dining room.

There was a certain sense of hostility in his grip, an unspoken distance that was perhaps irrationally
grating at your nerves.

Dinner was an unfortunate continuation of the awkward affair that had transpired in the study, with
Seto unwilling to spare a single word or glance in your direction.

You were almost impressed at how he managed to reserve himself to such silence without needing
to occupy his attention towards anything particular like his phone.
You weren’t entirely sure when the hostility had started, whether it had been there since he had
gotten into the car, or if it was when you refused to apologize in the bedroom, or perhaps it was
your unwillingness to open a conversation in the study that had sparked it; you couldn’t begin to
guess.

Unable to tolerate this nonsensical cold war, you hesitantly reached out and placed a slice of stir
fried Kobe beef over his bowl of rice, and while he had eaten it without rejecting it, the silence
persisted and he made no motion to reciprocate the gesture.

He didn’t acknowledge you as the two of you returned to the bedroom, opting to work on the tablet
by his bedside.

A cold shower served no purpose besides chilling you to the bone while giving you a heart attack
and possibly pneumonia. Your anxiety still rolled over your nerves in unrelenting waves and the
thought of being forced to endure this treatment indefinitely was enough to almost inspire a panic
attack.

As you buried yourself under the sheets wearing a white cotton nightgown with straps that tied into
bows over your shoulders, you could still feel the aftermath of the shower lingering in your veins.

“You’re freezing,” you heard Seto note as he wrapped his arms around you from behind. An
involuntary shudder escaped you at his touch as your cold body was suddenly enveloped in a warm
heat. “Do you want me to turn off the air conditioning? I think you’re catching a cold again,” he
inquired, speaking a full sentence without the subtle animosity for the first time since lunch.

“No.”

You heard what you felt was a rather aggravated sigh from behind you, likely at the vagueness of
your answer.

You knew you should have been more forthcoming in that moment. He was clearly trying.

Turning over on your back, you could see his eyes looking past you into the distance as he lay on
his side against you. There was an unmissable trace of vexation in his eyes, an edge that was
normally absent when he was with you.

A shiver shook through your body as the coldness that had seeped in from your earlier shower
passed over your chest. His grip around you tightened, leaning his body into yours as he ran his
hand up and down your arm to generate heat. Each of his motions felt mechanical, his thoughts
were clearly elsewhere.

You watched his blue eyes steadily fixed against the opposite wall in the far corner of the room,
etirely devoid of emotion or movement besides the blinking which punctuated this motionless
state for a while, before it started to disturb you.

“What’s wrong?” you finally asked, placing a hand against his face. His eyes snapped from their
trance to look at you, a sharpness in his gaze.

“Nothing for you to concern yourself with,” he dismissed, brushing your hand away with his left
hand before placing it back over your stomach.

“You can tell me,” you softly insisted. This earned you another glare which again appeared as if it
was slightly detached from reality. “Is it work?”

He made a guttural hum in agreement. You knew him better.
“Did you need me to drive you to work tomorrow? I can come drop you off any time before ten,” he abruptly offered after a while of silence.

“Why ten?”

“My first meeting tomorrow is at ten thirty.”

You didn’t have any particular schedules until the afternoon, but didn’t want to turn down his offer.

“Sure, whenever you’re going to work is fine.”

He hummed again in acknowledgement before closing his eyes.

You watched him for a while longer, knowing from the way his eyes moved under his closed lids that he was clearly more troubled than he was letting on.

“Are you having trouble sleeping?” you questioned gently, his eyes opening slowly to meet yours in response.

“Of course not,” he asserted roughly, before closing them again.

The longer you watched him, the more it became apparent to you that he struggling against some form of emotional distress, perhaps without him even fully comprehending it himself, or perhaps he believed he was concealing it well.

The root of this distress eluded you; after all, it was darkest under the lamp.

Your maternal instincts were dull; obviously, possibly even non-existent given you never had a caregiving figure to learn from, where as in contrast to his stoic and unfeeling disposition, your husband’s senses were much sharper in that area.

It felt awkward to you to try and emulate such affection and yet remembering all the instances he had cared for you, you found yourself pulling away from his embrace.

His eyes snapped open at you, irritation brewing in his blue orbs – possibly anticipating an argument - his gaze trained on you as you settled against the headboard.

Propping your pillow behind your back, you curled your legs around his shoulders, cradling his head against your lap, as you leaned over him, placing your left elbow above his left shoulder on his pillow, face hovering over his; your hair draped away from falling on his face.

You offered him a small smile.

The irritation you had observed turned swiftly to confusion, and while he elected to remain silent, his eyes watched you intently.

You ran your fingers over his untamed fringe before tangling them in his hair. You pressed your fingertips against his head, massaging gently in a way that wouldn’t rouse him when you lifted your fingers away eventually.

“What are you doing?” he questioned completely caught off guard, though you noticed his tone didn’t carry irritation. He also didn’t motion to stop you, so you continued.

“Shh,” you cooed, as you continued to draw circles with your fingers.

Almost skeptically, he closed his eyes, after a few more moments of studying you, quite visibly
disconcerted.

Bending over, you placed a kiss against his forehead over his wild bangs. His eyes flickered open again almost immediately

“What’s possessed you all of a sudden?” he inquired gruffly.

If you told him you were looking after him because you loved him, he would surely laugh, wouldn’t he?

“Try to get some sleep,” you whispered, urging him to close his eyes, and hesitantly he complied.

As midnight turned to one, and one slowly turned to two, you knew he was pretending to be asleep in hopes of having you also sleep, but he wasn't fooling anyone. You knew exactly what his breathing was like when he was sleeping and right now, his breaths were too shallow and uneven. His expression was also, as convincing as he may have felt he was, it was a degree too tense for him to actually be sleeping. You knew him too well.

Briefly, the thought that you weren't helping him as you had hoped to crossed your mind and for what you assumed selfish reasons, it was immensely saddening. You wouldn't comprehend that those feelings stemmed more from a place of affection and concern for him than your own self.

You also wouldn’t realize that this was the first time he felt genuinely loved by you. To him, for the first time, he felt he wasn’t merely wanted by you to fulfill a certain need or duty, and was fighting to hold on to the feeling for a moment longer as sleep came knocking.
I don’t know, I feel like I missed the mark with this one and where I wanted to go. I don’t know if the degree of intimacy I wanted to capture was indeed captured and portrayed. There’s not much you can do besides re-writing everything and it’s hard to do that when you already have 24 pages of previous material hanging over you – that is, I don’t think I could freshly carve out this chapter from scratch when it already has an existing predecessor. And, I just didn’t have the patience for re-writing over 7000 words. I will admit it’s not my best work, but I hope you do still enjoy :) Perhaps you will enjoy the mundane charm, so to speak.

Also... 1000 and some comments...wow, thank you so much!

Around two forty-seven, once you were certain Seto was deep enough in sleep he wouldn’t be roused if you moved – you assumed he had been sleeping for about half an hour by now – you carefully reached over for his phone, turning it to silent mode so that his alarm set for four in the morning wouldn’t wake him. He needed more than two hours of sleep to function, given that you still assumed he was human and not part cyborg – anatomically he seemed to prove he was human at least.

You would have changed the alarm time instead, but you’ve never bothered to ask him for his password, so instead, you set your alarm for nine o’clock in the morning and placed it on his nightstand. You remembered him saying that his earliest meeting was at ten that morning and you were confident Kaiba Corp. wouldn’t burn down in his absence if he was unreachable for a few extra hours. If the morons that were under him were capable of accomplishing such a stupid, though rather stupendous feat, then you figured, well, it was well deserved and would stand to be a learning experience. That being said though, you changed his phone to vibrate and tucked it under your pillow for good measure.

It was possible that he would wake up later that morning to your alarm and have an absolute aneurysm at your ‘little stunt,’ as he would call it, no, in fact you were quite certain he would, but from your experience, one missed meeting or phone call has never ruined your career.

Moving back to slip under the sheets, he stirred slightly, head shifting towards you, with his soft locks falling over as he did, and in your panicked haste thinking you had woken him up, your fingers dove back into his hair.

You weren’t sure for how much longer you continued to run your fingers against his hair before falling asleep in that uncomfortably contorted position. You were roused briefly to the sensation of being moved or turned over, though you couldn’t be sure in that moment if you were dreaming or not, until you were quite rudely awoken by what at first you assumed was a minor earthquake. Soon you learned that your husband’s phone had an obnoxiously aggressive vibration setting.

Pulling away from where you had been nestled against Seto’s chest, you reached under your pillow. Still bleary-eyed, you only managed to register the time – five twenty-five – as you answered the phone.
As exhausted and sleep deprived as you were – or perhaps as a result of this ill combination – you thought it would be hilarious to answer the phone the way your husband did.

“Kaiba,” you greeted stoically. You had tried to sound assertive, but in your current state, your voice left you strained and evidently tired, though if nothing else, you did at least convey a great deal of ownership over the name.

You heard your name being called from the other end, a tinge of disbelief and shock to their tone, and you managed to recognize the voice to be Kaoru’s. Oh just lovely.

“Would you be kind enough to pass the phone to Mr. Kaiba?” you heard him ask; his voice sounded slightly distant and his formality struck you oddly.

“My husband isn’t able to answer this call at the moment,” you advised as impassively as you could manage, “can I be of assistance?”

Seto had hardly been asleep for three hours, and you weren’t about to allow him to run his health to the ground. You did contemplate waking him up, but he appeared so peaceful and comfortable in his sleeping state that you didn’t have the heart to.

You wouldn’t dare admit it out loud, but he almost looked angelic, as he stirred again in his sleep, huddling up to your side. A jarring contrast considering when he was awake, he always looked like Hades, on the verge of bursting into flames. You combed your fingers through his hair, smiling to yourself, waiting for the director to answer.

It took you a moment longer before your mind grasped the situation, including why the ordinarily, aggressively flirtatious Kaoru was acting so professionally and why his voice had sounded to be coming from a distance; this was a conference call. You were on loud speaker with however many directors from Seto’s board.

Fuck.

Convincing yourself that you were more than capable of answering this phone call, you were mentally kicking yourself as you spoke your next words.

“My husband can’t make it to the phone at this very moment, anything I can help you gentlemen with?”

There was an eruption of hushed – some outraged – whispers before another board member drawled.

“Unfortunately Mrs. Kaiba, given your position as the head of Kodama, it would be a conflict of interest for us to disclose any information.”

Understandable.

Well, then...

“Well I’ll have him call you back, though it won’t be for a few hours. Would you like a specific message passed on?” you inquired, your poised, business air returning to you as sleep faded from your system.

“It’s an emergency,” an unfamiliar voice asserted.
It was never an emergency until you were being summoned by your board with a driver at your door. You knew this better than anyone.

“Well then I suggest you call the vice president. I’m sure he is more than capable of handling whatever situation Kaiba Corp. is currently facing. Your other option is speaking to a rivaling company’s CEO who would still offer a resolution in your company’s best interest given my relationship with your CEO. Otherwise, I bid you gentleman a good day.”

You stalled a second longer than you needed to before ending the phone call, and they took the bait.

“A Kaiba Corp. communication satellite has crashed.”

Okay, so this was something you could handle, great. His satellite systems couldn’t be any different from yours.

“Was the network compromised somehow or was it an internal failure?”

“That’s classified information,” a board member denied your query sternly.

“Then I can’t help you gentlemen, though given how crucial a time the current period is for Kaiba Corp. I can only imagine the setbacks this will have.”

“It was internal,” Kaoru’s voice reluctantly answered sighing.

“Does the mainframe not have a back-up program for the primary satellite’s functions that you can run through a secondary satellite until the original is restored?”

It was an obvious solution, and you figured they would have already attempted it before calling the CEO, at least, your employees would have, but it was better to start from the ‘have you turned it off and back on again,’ troubleshooting step.

“I suppose we can do that,” you heard an older voice drawl.

_Are you serious?_

“You called without trying the first step in the book? What does he pay you morons for?” you muttered in a sharp whisper, unable to stop yourself while desperately trying to not wake your husband. It occurred to you how much you sounded like him.

You heard disorderly shuffling before silence ensued on the other side of the line, with the exception of the occasional, muted mutter.

“Was any data lost in transmission?” you questioned, your patience beginning to thin after almost fifteen minutes of waiting in silence.

“It doesn’t seem that way, our safety net was successful in recovering –”

The new, considerably younger voice was abruptly quietened by what sounded like an older voice of a board member.

It was fine; you had received the answer you wanted.

“Fire whoever calibrated the system last,” you demanded out of habit, before ordering the board on how to proceed with recovering the crashed satellite back to functioning condition.
A few more moments were spent idly in silence, before Kaoru finally spoke, his voice sounding much closer, indicating to you that you were no longer on loudspeaker.

“Our diagnostics team is on their way to re-routing the functions through the second satellite,” he informed. “We will need more time to follow the directions given to reboot the first.”

“Right, well if that’s all,” you began to say when you thought you heard Seto say something next to you. Instinctively shushing him softly, you heard Kaoru speak again as you were about to end the phone call.

“Is that Mr. Kaiba?” Kaoru inquired inquisitively.

“Hold on,” you advised, apprehensively peering down to see if you had accidentally woken your husband up, in which case this whole fiasco would have been a waste of everyone’s time and your own efforts. He looked to still be asleep, though he was beginning to stir. “That’s none of your concern, Mr. Hidehira” you stated before disconnecting the line.

You could hear a detached voice speaking in a hushed tone as your conscious mind came to. You felt your lips curving into a smile as you smelt your husband’s scent closely next to you. There was something running through your hair.

Slowly opening your eyes, the earlier heaviness that was weighing your head had dissipated. There was a stronger sunlight penetrating through the drawn curtains. You could see your husband speaking to someone on the phone, sitting up against the headboard.

His eyes drifted down to you, and he instantly hung up on whoever, focusing his attention on you.

There was that look of Hades in his eye again.

You tilted your head up at him in apprehension, fully expecting to be brutally told off – you hadn’t been on the best terms going to sleep either.

“You’re drooling,” he noted dryly, reaching his hand down, and wiping away at the corner of your mouth with his thumb.

“Seto, no ew,” you mumbled, cringing.

“You’re being a child,” he dismissed. “I heard you successfully instructed my board members through the back up procedures for a Kaiba Corp. satellite malfunction and fired half my diagnostics team before even six this morning. I’m impressed,” he commended, an unrestrained smirk which conveyed his amusement playing on his lips.

“You’re not mad?” you asked in confusion, pulling yourself up to lean against his chest, as you rubbed the sleep out of your eyes.

“I think it’s fucking hilarious, though I would have been if you messed up,” he admitted sardonically.

“Have you seen the time?” you inquired cautiously.

“I have.”

“And… you’re not mad?” you inquired again slower.
“Just don’t do it again,” he ordered, though somewhat gently, making no motion to get up.

“What time is it?”

“Almost ten,” he informed, as he looked over his phone screen that lit up at his touch on the nightstand.

“Almost ten? Don’t you have a meeting at ten thirty?” you asked frantically, hands clumsily slipping over the sheets as you turned to face him.

“It’s my meeting, why are you getting so worked up?” he questioned sarcastically, “I postponed it to this afternoon. I think after what you did this morning, you deserve a reward,” he paused as if to consider something, “or should I say punishment?” he inquired darkly, forcing you on your back as he hovered over you.

“What?”

“You behaved badly,” he purred, voice weighed down with desire that eluded you. “You should have woken me up.”

“I’m sorry,” you spoke quietly, “I didn’t want to wake you up, it’s not good for your health what you’re doing.”

“You could stand to be more subservient like this more often,” he growled in your ear seductively.

I don’t think so.

Intending to express this thought, you opened your lips, only to be betrayed by your own voice, as only a whimper left you, overwhelmed by his lips against a particularly sensitive spot on your neck.

“That’s what I like to hear,” he husked, one hand sliding up your stomach to clasp over your breast, sliding the fabric of your nightgown over your nipple teasingly.

“Seto,” you mewled in response.

“Take off your nightgown,” he demanded, suddenly pulling away.

“What?” It took a moment for his words to make sense to you. “No…Seto —”

“Take it off or I’ll do it myself,” he threatened, a smirk playing on his lips.

“You can try,” you scoffed, not for a second believing what you assumed to be a bluff.

His eyebrow raised in response.

“Is that a challenge?” he smirked, apparently amused, “I think I’ve undressed you enough times by now for you to know better than to challenge me.”

You parted your lips to say his name in protest, but before the first syllable had left you, his hands had already gathered your hem, tugging it upwards; the cotton fabric scraping against the skin of your back. Your back arched at the sensation reflexively, allowing him to more easily slip the dress off of you.

Resisting him was futile.
“Lift up your arms,” he ordered; the fabric gathered above your chest, leaving your breasts exposed. He forcefully held your gaze and under it, you slowly complied.

The nightgown grazed past your face as he discarded it somewhere beyond the bed.

“What on earth are you doing? It’s the middle of the morning,” you resisted, pushing your palms against his chest.

He pulled his shirt over his head.

“Holding you to your end of the bargain,” he offered plainly in response.

“What bargain?”

“I didn’t say a word to you at the restaurant. A deal’s a deal, you should know better than anyone else,” he declared darkly. “I expect you to honour your word.”

You allowed his words to slowly sink in, as the promise you had made in your reckless haste surfaced in your memory. Eyes closing in defeat, you bit your lip as regret over your thoughtlessness overcame you.

“You wouldn’t.”

“That’s business my love,” he purred in a smug tone which openly conveyed his feelings of triumph. “I also like that you didn’t specify a time constraint on your offer,” he added, as he laid his bare chest over yours, placing his lips against your neck under your earlobe, before trailing them down; his bare skin rolling over your nipples as he brought his mouth over your breast.

Son of a -

You weren’t allowed the liberty of cohesively completing that thought before the swirling of his tongue against your hardening nipple elicited a sudden spasm from your back.

Reflexively, your hands shot up to tangle in his hair, pulling his head closer to you. Seto’s hands dove under your back in response, holding you closer.

Ecstasy slowly began to find you, your heartrate accelerating; the touch of his bare skin against yours was enough to madden you, but the moment was short lived, as your husband’s phone began to ring.

“What is it now?” he growled, irritating washing over his features, as he forced himself to reluctantly pull away to reach for his phone.

“Kaiba.” Still between your bare legs, he answered.

His eyes darted back and forth over empty space while he listened, his gaze occasionally grazing over you, absentmindedly brushing strands of stray hair from your face, and tucking them behind your ear, his attention never leaving the conversation.

You watched him intently in the dim room, not motioning to move.

The conversation continued for a few more moments, perhaps minutes, before a strong sensation of nausea drowned your senses. It was all you could seem to focus on. A hand clasped against your mouth.

Scrambling to remove yourself from the bed, and away from your husband, you awkwardly
thrashed in place, before Seto, seemingly comprehending the situation, slipped a hand under your arm, pulling you up against the headboard.

Swinging your legs off the side of the bed, you somehow managed to slip the nightgown back on before making a mad dash for the bathroom.

Emerging from the bathroom a few, agonizing moments later, Seto was waiting leaning against the doorway.

“What was that about?” he inquired in a gruff tone, narrowing his eyes at you.

“My reflux,” you dismissed, “I didn’t sleep well last night and my sleep cycle was messed up so I think that’s what brought it on. There was no blood so relax.”

“Are you sure that’s what it was?” he persisted, unconvinced. His doubt was unsettling you also.

You sincerely hoped so.

“I’m sure,” you lied, a deceiving tone of assurance to your words.

…

Monday night was interesting in that it unveiled to you many conspiracies or at least the shadows of shady dealings you weren’t previously aware of.

Obviously a statement such as that shouldn’t have commenced with such an underwhelming introduction as ‘interesting,’ surely, but you were still in the process of deciding how to regard what you had accidentally discovered.

The dimly lit hallways of Kaiba Corp. reminded you of some futuristic, post-apocalyptic forensic lab, with its glass and metal construction and eerie light-blue neon lights which lit the corridors after hours.

It was still earlier than you usually came by, hardly past nine.

Up ahead of you in the disconcertingly lit corridor, you could see two tall figures conversing. Approaching the two men, you recognized one to be the rat in Seto’s board, director Korin Harada, and the other – Kaoru?

They seemed very well acquainted with each other, and not in the somewhat reserved, formal manner in which colleagues interacted, no, they appeared to be exceptionally friendly with each other.

You had no alternative besides walking towards them given the layout of the corridor, so grudgingly, you continued forward. The sound of your stiletto notifying the men of your presence, you quickly gained both their attention, their conversation promptly ceasing.

Kaoru seemed visibly pleased to see you, though the same could hardly be said of the older gentlemen standing beside him. Harada’s expression turned immediately sour, his conduct quickly becoming withdrawn.

“She doesn’t dress in a way which helps the age matter does she?” you heard Harada remark pointedly of your outfit to the younger director. He may have assumed he was whispering, or he
may have been declaring that outright purposefully for you to hear, you couldn’t be sure.

You raised an eyebrow, discreetly peering down at your Chanel ensemble, consisting of a houndstooth pinafore over a slightly oversized baby blue blouse and black thigh high stockings which ended at mid-thigh, about an inch and a half under your hem.

You supposed he hated the beret too.

It wasn’t worth the effort to respond.

Following this comment, Harada swiftly excused himself without so much as a greeting to the president’s wife.

_Really, you couldn’t make an effort to make yourself look loyal and less like a treacherous rat?_

“I didn’t realise you and Mr. Harada were so closely acquainted,” you flatly questioned Kaoru in greeting.

“Yes, I was appointed to the board upon his recommendation, he’s taken a liking to me for some reason. He’s been very supportive in all my _pursuits_,” he explained, the way he spoke the word ‘pursuits’ striking you oddly.

“Is that all?” you questioned, smiling sweetly, possibly overstepping your boundaries in your search for answers.

If there was more to this connection, you were determined to uncover it.

“I don’t think I understand,” he responded faintly perplexed.

“Never mind,” you dismissed quickly, fearing he might grow suspicious of your motives. “Was the satellite restored?”

“Yes, thanks to you.”

“That’s a relief to hear –” you began to say before you were interrupted.

“I didn’t realize you and Mr. Kaiba were so — familiar with each other.”

You tilted your head in confusion, brushing your hair over your shoulder as you waited for him to elaborate. He didn’t and his silence prompted you to speak.

“Why wouldn’t we be? He’s –”

“Your husband, yes, I’m aware, but am I mistaken in assuming it’s –” he interrupted himself, “you wouldn’t have developed personal feelings for him, have you?”

“That’s – that’s very inappropriate for you to ask of me, and I don’t feel comfortable answering that,” you deflected, flustered by his forwardness. Seto wouldn’t want you discussing the specifics of your marriage to a director of his board, especially this one.

He opened his mouth to speak again, only to be disturbed by a rather thunderous voice, effectively startling you.

You were distinctly reminded of all the interpretations you had ever seen of the god of the underworld.
“I thought I told you to stay away from my wife.”

You felt an arm drape over you, sliding past your shoulder before securing against your upper arm. From your peripheral, you could see your husband standing protectively beside you; you wouldn’t dare look him in the eye.

“It was a coincidence,” you quietly offered in explanation.

Perhaps remaining silent was the wiser option.

…

“You’re defending him now?” he roared accusingly as his office door closed a few feet behind you.

“I’m sorry, that wasn’t my intention,” you contested softly.

“I don’t want to see you anywhere near him, do you understand?”

“Yes, I’ll try.”

“Trying isn’t good enough,” he bellowed, “I expect you to stay away from him. Don’t speak to him. I don’t even want to see you acknowledge him,” he commanded.

You sighed, willing for the shock his screaming had inflicted on you to subside.

“Seto, let’s not ruin the night because of him, I brought dinner,” you attempted to appease him, as he settled into his chair.

You held up the paper bag for a few more moments without earning his gaze or attention, before walking up to his desk and unpacking the contents.

He didn’t make an effort to look away from his screen as you set down the four tiered, black lacquer bento box with traditional gold motifs painted across the surface.

“You’re going to get it all over my papers,” he grumbled, finally sparing you a glance as you began to unstack the tiers, but there was a reason behind why you were so adamant on him eating it, even if he appeared to have absolutely no inclination towards having dinner right at that moment.

Fishing out a pair of chopsticks from the paper bag, you picked up a piece of sautéed beef from one of the middle layers of the box, holding it out in front of his mouth, urging him to eat it.

He quite unwillingly turned his head towards you, raising an eyebrow, his features lined with irritation, either at your persistence, or with the remnants from the previous incident.

“Just try it,” you insisted firmly, and he complied, though he spared no time focusing his attention back on his computer.

He chewed it distractedly for a few moments before turning to look at you accusingly, this time; you had gained his full attention. His fingers had finally, fully disconnected from the keyboard.

“Did you fire the chef?”

You froze.

“What?”
“This doesn’t taste like it usually does.”

“Is it awful?” you asked apprehensively biting your lower lip, chest tightening with disappointment.

“Not exactly,” he hesitated in thought, “it’s better, who made this?”

“You’re sure?” you probed cautiously, peering over to observe his face with increased curiosity. “I made it.”

In an attempt to continue the momentum from this morning, cancelling your late evening schedules, you had spent the last five hours in the manor’s kitchen preparing this excessive supper which, calling it anything short of a feast was doing your efforts a disservice.

His brows furrowed as he turned to face you, a mixture of intrigue and concern faintly visible on his face, his eyes darting from the myriad of side dishes back up to meet yours.

“You — cook?” he questioned disbelievingly, “You hardly eat — where did you learn how to – ”

“It’s a hobby,” you offered cutting in.

“When did you have the time? Did you manage all this yourself?”

His eyes narrowed as they swept over the black lacquer tiers again.

“Yeah, though I don’t think the kitchen staff appreciated me evicting them from the kitchen and then asking where everything was every five minutes. Your kitchen is unnecessarily large…and hard to navigate…” You were rambling.

Why were you this nervous?

“That still doesn’t tell me where you found the time.”

“I took the day off from work,” you smiled anxiously, leaning on your palms against his desk, the chopsticks still strung through your fingers.

He looked at least mildly impressed, though he was yet to actually taste anything besides the one dish.

“You were just at a radio broadcast.”

“Yes, thus the outfit,” you stated in an attempt to be witty out of nervous habit, “I managed to keep the one schedule.”

Seto looked thoughtful for a moment; his fingers laced in front of his face, before standing up abruptly, picking up two of the tiers and walking around his desk towards the sofas. You had expected and prepared yourself to do much more convincing for him to abandon his work in favour of dinner, so you stood there in bewilderment for a few moments at how he hadn’t needed any persuading at all.

“Aren’t you a little too old to dress like a school girl?” he questioned sarcastically, studying you over his shoulder, demanding your attention back to reality.
Men and their upsettingly dull sense of fashion, you scowled. *Would it kill him to pick up a Vogue every now and again?*

“Do you expect me to walk around in a ball gown or dressed ready to address a board meeting all the time just because of my job description?” you shot back annoyed, as you made to join him with the two remaining tiers.

“It wouldn’t hurt,” he muttered, much to your irritation, “though, I don’t recall saying I disliked *this,*” he added after a moment of thought, placing the small chests on the coffee table.

Walking around the coffee table to sit beside Seto on the sofa, you admired the city lights below that were lighting up Domino’s skyline from beyond the wall of windows.

His attention seemed to be occupied elsewhere, as he continued to stare in a mild state of shock at the platters of food that lay spread across the glass table.

“I wish we could do things like this more often,” you stated, slipping off your heels and lifting your legs on to the grey cushions of the sofa, as you curled up against his arm.

“You’re acting unlike yourself,” he remarked, looking down at where you were leaning against his arm. The statement didn’t seem to convey that he was averse to your behaviour, simply his perplexity.

“Sorry, would you rather me be act unaffectionate and taciturn?” You had meant for it to be a joke, though reflecting on your words after the fact, you wondered if it would be received as such. Well aware of his ineptness for perceiving even the most straightforward of humour, you quickly clarified, urging yourself to be a little more forthcoming than you’ve allowed yourself to be. “I just meant – I suppose it took me a while to grow comfortable to you. I wasn’t sure how you’d react to a lot of things – I mean – your reputation is –” you sighed, interrupting your disjointed stuttering.

Being unable to see his face did alleviate some of the nervousness and yet physically forcing yourself to voice your thoughts brought on such a sense of vulnerability and fear of rejection that you found yourself failing to form a coherent sentence.

You habitually laced your fingers through his hand – the one you were currently leaning against.

“What about my reputation?” he inquired, seemingly amused, releasing a low, guttural laugh. He unravelled his fingers from yours, wrapping the arm you had been lounging on over your shoulder and waist, allowing your body to fall over his lap, as you slipped forward slightly with his movement.

He leaned forward, picking up a pair of chopsticks laid over one of the bento tiers, levelling it against the glass surface after positioning it between his fingers.

He was quite obviously teasing you, you deduced; surely he was aware of how much fear and reverence he was regarded with. One also didn’t have to be employed under Seto Kaiba to be aware and fearful of him and his influence.

He peered down at you, making a low humming sound, urging you to answer him.

You watched in trepidation at him reaching towards the buttered, garlic lobster tails, an involuntary shiver running the course of your body as you anticipated his reaction to your cooking, while contemplating how best to answer his question.

He set down his chopsticks as he felt you shudder against him, removing his suit jacket and
“You’re not answering,” he pressed. You hesitated for a moment longer. “It’s good,” he remarked, having tried the lobster. Some relief finding your nerves, you gathered some composure to answer him.

“You’re – I assumed you would be scary,” you corrected yourself, “I didn’t at first, think you’d be a good husband… to me.”

“You think I’m a good husband?” He seemed genuinely surprised; a well concealed tinge of satisfaction or perhaps pride lingered in his tone.

“I think you’ve become more than just a husband,” you admitted, nerves rolling in your gut as you forced yourself to endure through your feelings of vulnerability for a moment longer, “I think you’ve become a companion, to me.”

Silence…

Your eyes flickered restlessly across the lights beyond his window and back, breathing stiffly under his embrace. In that moment which seemed to stretch for an absurd length of time, you feared a great number of things, had you overshar med; placing upon him a burden he wasn’t willing to accept, did he not reciprocate those feelings, did he –

“The feeling is mutual,” he suddenly declared, his tone plain, possibly concealing sentiments he didn’t want you to hear. His voice despite this, sounded sincere, and that was enough for you.

You felt elation, relief and an embracing sense of warmth, altogether. You sensed pent up tension slowly dissolving from your nerves, and you allowed yourself to relax into him.

Seto tried each of your side dishes, occasionally returning back to ones he particularly liked.

“I am impressed you’re capable of all this, I wasn’t aware you were,” he admitted, “You need to make something the next time the mansion holds a banquet. That’ll give those air headed arm accessories my partners call wives something to talk about,” he added, a smugness apparent in his tone.

“Thank you,” you mumbled quietly.

Seto Kaiba didn’t give compliments openly, if ever, and he certainly didn’t offer them dishonestly, you reminded yourself. Internally, you were dancing. If this didn’t warrant a mental jig, you weren’t sure what did.

Combing the hair away from your face, he held out a shrimp dumpling in front of you in his fingers.

“Knowing you, you probably haven’t eaten all day.”

“I ate plenty making everything,” you rejected.

“Nonsense.” Ignoring your protests, he stubbornly pushed the dumpling against your lips, smearing the mayo sauce it was covered in all over, as you were forced to quite grudgingly open your mouth. He wiped away the spicy, white sauce that you could feel tingling on your lips with his thumb, before bringing it against his own lips, all the while, maintaining a perfectly stoic countenance.

You slapped his chest with the back of your hand at the sly innuendo. You looked up to see him
smirk in response, informing you that he had indeed done so intentionally.

He really wasn’t as uptight as everyone painted him to be – when he wanted to be that was.

It seemed very natural to him, feeding you. You supposed it was habit from when he raised Mokuba. The thought brought another smile to your lips, one that seemingly wouldn’t wear off.

“You could stand to smile like that more often,” he remarked, as he had done once before in this very office. You didn’t respond, not entirely certain if you knew how to or even if he expected you to, as he continued to eat, while also bringing the chopsticks to you every so often.

You were resisting a piece of sushi Seto was quite persistently attempting to force into your mouth when his office door opened after a brief knock. Entering promptly following a knock, without waiting for an answer you thought, defeated the entire purpose of knocking. It was thoroughly irritating.

It seemed to have become the norm, and tolerated by Seto as of late, you’ve noticed, at least during this time crunch period the company was currently under, with the video game release approaching.

You watched in mortification as Kaoru, followed by a group of men in business attire, some with their suit jackets removed, walked in mumbling their pardons and apologies for their intrusion, momentarily pausing as they were faced with an empty desk, before their attention was directed towards the sofa.

The men were evidently disconcerted – then again, as were you.

Your eyes darted about your current position; sprawled over Seto’s lap, his jacket draped over your shoulders, his hand suspended in mid-air in front of your lips.

He immediately dropped the piece of sushi back into the bento box, eyes hardening, as his face instinctively contorted into an irritated scowl, reminding you again, quite distinctively of a certain lord of the underworld. He brushed the grease off his fingers by briskly rubbing them against each other.

Swiftly, he supported your weight, forcing you into a sitting position. His movements in contrast to your agitated state, was calm and composed, as expected of him.

“What is it now?” he inquired roughly, seemingly aware of the reason for the sudden visit, standing up from beside you; his hands leaving your upper arms.

He appeared to be entirely unfazed by the intrusion, not in the least bit uncomfortable or embarrassed – not that he was capable of experiencing such emotions.

You quickly slipped your feet back into your heels, fallen on their sides by the foot of the coffee table. Brushing down your dress before securing Seto’s suit jacket over your shoulders, in your haste, you had failed to recognize the anguish that had washed over a certain board director’s face. You had actually ignored entirely the reactions of the men currently occupying your husband’s attention, in an attempt to not suffer any further awkwardness.

You wouldn’t care what they made of the intimacy they had experienced of you and Seto, you told yourself, though in truth, it bothered you a great deal. Perhaps it was as a result of you being accustomed to always perfectly curating every part of your life that was displayed to the public, that unintentionally revealing aspects, especially ones that were so personal, disturbed you immensely.
The discussion lasted no longer than a few minutes, with Seto reviewing a file one of the men had handed to him, before wordlessly stalking out of the office, the group of men at his heel.

Kaoru trailed behind the group, pausing briefly before the door as it closed behind the last man that has walked in front of him. He turned his head to look at you. You continued to sit perfectly still on the sofa, where Seto had left you, eyes shifting uncomfortably over everything but in his direction, as you desperately willed for him to exit the office without making conversation with you.

From your peripheral, you observed him part his lips to say something, before promptly sealing them closed. He aggressively swung the office door open a moment later, disappearing behind it.

Cleaning up the scattered bento box tiers, and wiping down the coffee table, you sought to occupy yourself with staring out the wall of windows, at the expanse of golden lights against the darkened city under night’s veil.

Turning Seto’s chair to face the massive wall of glass, your eyes flickered over the thousands upon thousands of tiny, brightly lit windows adorning the sky scrapers below, wondering to yourself if all those small dots of gold were occupied by some poor soul working their life away like the people in this building were.

You were thoroughly engrossed in your own thoughts that you hadn’t heard the door opening behind you or the footsteps that approached. Your attention was only drawn to the figure that stood facing the desk when his hoarse voice startled you out of your pointless wondering.

“Mr. Kaiba, sir, we have trained marksmen on Tetsuo Wakamura around the clock. Our members have also infiltrated his security team –” the man began to say before he caught your eye in the reflection of the glass wall.

What?

Well that could have gone better.

Languidly pulling yourself off the chair - though mostly for dramatic effect - you walked around to stand behind the desk, facing the man.

“I’m assuming I wasn’t supposed to hear that, judging by your expression,” you smirked, your lips tugging further upwards as you recognized the man. “You’re from the Jade Serpent syndicate, aren’t you? I’ve seen you with the Ice Dragons. I’ve seen you work with Inoue – Soryu’s right hand.”

He immediately fell into a deep bow at those words.

“I didn’t realize you were so closely acquainted with the head of the Ice Dragons,” he exclaimed loudly, in a sharp tone, referring to both you and Soryu with honorifics. You didn’t anticipate naming Soryu by his first name would have such an effect on the man. He also clearly knew who you were.

“I won’t put you in a difficult spot,” you informed him, a dangerous edge to your deceivingly kind tone, “tell me everything my fiancé has instructed for you to do and everything you were about to report, and neither he nor your boss will hear anything about this mess up. I’ll make it as if this unfortunate meeting never happened. I’m sure you would like to continue making a living,” you smiled, the dark glimmer in your eye betraying your friendly attitude. “I’m good at telling when
people are lying, so don’t try anything. I’ll also find out eventually from Mr. Kaiba, so if I find out even later that somehow you got by me,” you paused leaning forward over the desk, tilting his head up as he remained in a forty-five degree bow, with your index finger, “who knows, maybe my tongue will slip of this encounter.”

Your smile never left your lips.

You were a master of manipulation, and took great pride in the fact.

The man revealed that he and his underlings were instructed by the head of the syndicate to trail Tetsuo Wakamura, infiltrate his circle, and have him at gunpoint with the trigger ready to be pulled at Seto’s command. He was also instructed to report his progress to Seto. Upon being asked what the reasons were behind your husband’s orders, the man swore that this was all he knew; that he merely followed orders and was in no position to ask for justification.

Your husband had one of the most powerful men in the weapons industry at gun point, Wakamura’s life at his mercy, huh. You shouldn’t have expected any less from the most powerful man in the country.

You hadn’t even been aware that the Kaiba family – your family – had connections with the Jade Serpents, the most powerful organized crime syndicate in the country.

Suddenly, Seto was terrifying again, though you supposed it would be hypocritical of you to judge him based on his connections to the Jade Serpents, when you were so closely acquainted with Ice Dragons – the Chinese equivalent.

You released the man, and retreated to the sofa, allowing everything you had discovered to sink in.

Oddly, in some ways, knowing that your attacker was to a certain degree bound, was comforting, regardless of the means that were used to achieve it. You deemed yourself foolish for believing that such extensive measures, that is, involving underworld organizations wouldn’t be necessary to resolve this threat. In hindsight, you should have contacted Soryu first.

Having considered all of this, your brain still craved for answers. Why were they after your corporation and possibly your husband’s? Was it simply a bid for power or –

You were pulled from your thoughts the second time when Seto came storming through the office doors followed by a group of men – you couldn’t be sure if they were the same from earlier - who looked visibly dishevelled; likely from the long hours they were being forced to pull.

They had a heated discussion gathered around Seto’s desk, which mainly consisted of Seto dragging the men’s abilities to filth.

*Nothing to see here.*

You tuned out the conversation, reserving yourself to the emails on your phone, though mostly falling back into your thoughts. You made your presence scarce while you waited for the men to leave and as soon as they did, Seto’s attention fell swiftly on you.

“You should be sleeping,” he declared.

“Sleep? It’s hardly past ten,” you protested.

“You looked unsettled earlier,” he abruptly recalled.
“I was, were you not? I put you in an uncomfortable position in front of your employees, quite literally. Does it not bother you?” you demanded to know, incredulously.

“You’re my wife,” he plainly stated, continuing on with almost a snide tone, “What else would they expect me to do with you behind closed doors?”

You didn’t realize he regarded the matter through such a black and white lens.

“I don’t know,” you faltered, “I had assumed you to be a great deal more private.”

“I am and I would have preferred to have avoided the earlier incident if it could have been helped, but ultimately it couldn’t be and there’s no sense in concerning ourselves about it now.”

His tone was considerably harsh.

You supposed he was right, no sense in crying over spilled milk.

Pushing everything that had transpired that night to the back of your mind, you stood to walk towards the cupboard you were subjected to sleep in, intending to have a shower before reviewing the drama script you needed to memorize.

Reaching the doorway of the closet, a sudden sensation of light headedness coursed through you. Your fingers clawed at the doorframe, blood leaving your knuckles as you struggled to support yourself; the dizzy spell worsening.

You heard quick strides behind you.

“If you are pregnant again,” he informed you, arms holding you up, “I want us to keep the child.”
"You can’t be serious."

His words left you nonplussed.

"I am. We’re –"

"The stress has finally gotten to you," you interrupted as he sat you down on the bed. "I mean look at you, your dark circles have dark circles."

"You’re being ridiculous; I got more sleep last night than I’ve gotten in my entire life."

"I’m not pregnant, Seto," you tried to say reassuringly, not wanting to add more stress on the man. You offered him a small smile, only to be met with a stern glower. "What brought this on?" you inquired gently touching his face.

He sighed, his hands weighing against your shoulders.

At this rate, he was going to give himself a stroke. It was clear he was placing too much strain on himself.

"I just want us to be more prepared this time," he spoke in a low tone, head hanging forward.

There was a knock in the distance against the office door before you could begin to counter his statement.

Understanding that this meant he would be working through the night, you decided to take a hot shower and –optimistically you hoped –occupy your mind with your own work, instead of all the extracurricular happenings of the night.

You weren’t mentally equipped to handle much that night it seemed, especially as all the unnecessary thoughts of dread and anxiety insisted on circling back to the surface of your mind, intensifying the tightness in your chest.

Being a billionaire, married to a billionaire, sleeping in a claustrophobia inducing cupboard – though perhaps you were being overly critical of its size - was not have you had envisioned your life.

Somewhat less on edge and prone to have a complete meltdown following the shower, you curled up under the sheets with your inch thick script, intending to at least make dent in that episode’s lines.

Your mind was still being pulled in a million different directions, including sales projection analysis reports you kept convincing yourself you were falling behind on, contracts you were yet to finalize and the oddly enough – though maybe not – a comment a producer had made passing
about an old scar on your upper thigh; you wondered if Seto saw it as weirdly. And these were beside all the unsolved conspiracies plaguing your mind.

You wondered why you were so emotional and sensitive all of a sudden tonight.

…

You stirred awake to an ill-lit room, the light from Seto’s office pouring in through the open door. You followed the intruding light to see him thoroughly engrossed in the computer screen before him at his desk.

Your script was neatly folded closed on the far nightstand. You realized the covers were pulled over you, your legs stretched out from their previously crossed position. You failed to recall doing that yourself, and a small smile found your lips.

Not too many more moments passed with you watching him contently from the distance before the reason you were roused became apparent to you. Rather, it so rudely demanded your attention.

You were slightly disconcerted at first as you felt what your brain initially deduced was a knife being driven into your lower abdomen and being violently twisted. The next moment afforded you more clarity, even as you doubled over in pain, your already sore muscles clenching, a strained cry leaving you.

A visit to the bathroom confirmed what you already knew, and in a sadistic way, you were actually quite happy – or at the very least relieved. The prospect of dealing with this nightmare for the next week was much less daunting than the life time commitment that was pregnancy.

Seeing how your body was already attempting to brutally murder you hardly an hour into the weeklong experience, you were certain it in fact was your period.

You didn’t need to see your waistline to be reminded that you weren’t planning on wearing any of your jeans this week anyway. Ugh.

Frantically scrambling for the pain medication, you were also already beginning to feel irrationally irritated at the inanimate object that was presently eluding you.

You couldn’t help but feel sorry for your poor husband who was about to be on the receiving end of all your emotional petulance.

Finally digging the small, white container, you could feel your legs start to lose feeling, though in some ways you wished you actually did, instead of being subjected to endure this agony.

Fighting the urge to overdose on the recommended amount of pain medication despite the crippling pain, reminding yourself of the hell that would surely follow courtesy of your acid reflux, you bound yourself to the one extra strength pill before heaving your throbbing body back to bed.

Tossing and turning erratically, while cursing at the absence of a hot water bottle, you finally concluded that there was no position comfortable on the stupid, useless, piece of garbage that was the bed.

“Are you expecting anyone else in your office?” you asked cautiously, peering out into your husband’s office from the doorway of your room.
Seto looked up at you from where he had been glaring at his screen while massaging his temples in deep thought.

“It’s three thirty in the morning, who in their right mind would still be here?” he questioned deadpanning.

*Well, doesn’t that speak volumes about you and I?*

You were going to excuse the attitude he just gave you as his fatigue talking.

“Alright,” you started, biting back a wince as you felt a sensation akin to a sharp edge grating against your lower abdomen pulse through you. Digging your fingers into the wooden doorframe, you continued, “Do you mind if I stay with you for a while?”

“What do you mean stay with me?” he inquired skeptically. “I can see you from here.”

Raking your brain for a graceful way to ask if you could sit on his lap for a while till you fell asleep, and coming up short, you decided you would help yourself and accept the consequences, should his wrath follow.

Being inside his office in your nightgown felt odd, though perhaps that was a result of the absolute respect your husband commanded when he was dressed in his work attire.

Traversing the short distance, you cautiously slipped behind his desk. He turned his chair towards you in response, a restrained expression which read that he was too tired for your ‘antics’ occupying his face.

Expecting a thorough scolding, you stepped between his legs, sitting on his lap.

“What are you doing?” he asked sharply, his tone gruff.

“I won’t bother you, I promise,” you spoke your words leaving you in such a burst that you hardly understood them. You cowered; pressing yourself as far as you could against his chest.

You felt him sigh in exasperation. You looked up apprehensively at his silence.

“What am I going to do with you,” he growled, before turning his chair back towards his computer, raising his arms towards the keyboard from either side of you.

His body heat seemed to soothe to a certain extent your convulsions, even if the position was utterly uncomfortable and not doing your crippling pain any favours. You desperately willed for sleep to overtake you, bracing yourself each time your body shook against him with spasms.

As more time passed, you were further convinced that this indeed was your period and not some other unfortunate symptom. The sensation of a wrecking ball swinging ruthlessly in pendulum motions against the walls of your lower abdomen was all too familiar.

“What is with you?” Seto finally snapped, looking over you. You could hear his typing cease.

“Sorry,” you bit your lip, tensing all your muscles so as to not allow the convulsions to be felt by him

“No,” he sighed, rephrasing, “I meant what’s wrong?”

“Just cramps.”
“Is it from what I think it is?”

“Well this was certainly very uncomfortable.

“Did you take pain medication? You’re shaking quite violently.”

You only marginally managed to smother the derisive laugh that almost escaped.

“This isn’t my first time you know,” you shot back. In that moment, that was the most polite response you could offer.

“And I’m assuming that’s the hormones speaking,” he groaned, exhaustion betraying his exasperation.

You couldn’t even disagree, except he had no idea how awful it had the potential to become.

Your hand shot up to his shirt, balling the fabric into your fist as another sensation akin to your lower abdomen being wrung from end to end pulsed down your thighs.

You couldn’t suppress the wince that left you.

“I don’t need your advice,” you declared through gritted teeth, as you felt him motion to say something. “I’ve been dealing with this for a very long time.”

“You don’t see why you need to be sitting on me to get through it,” he retorted in annoyance, though he wrapped his arm around you for good measure, likely predicting that you would otherwise stand and leave, given your ego which rivalled his.

You supposed you deserved that one.

“Sorry,” you offered in a strained voice.

He returned to his incessant typing and you tried to focus on the soft sound of his fingers connecting with the keys in an attempt to distract yourself from the pain.

When you came to again, the continuous stream of fingers against keys still fell steadily against your ears. You heard him curse under his breath as he felt you stir.

“Sorry, I’ll go back to bed,” you began to say when he interjected.

“Would it help if I worked from in there?”

It would help if you came to sleep.

“No, that’ll just get in the way of your work,” you declined, standing up, while still supporting yourself against him.

“I won’t ask twice.”

“Yes,” you sighed, “it would help.”

You walked back towards the bed, while he turned off his computer and followed behind you with his laptop a few minutes later.
Laying on your front, the sheets fallen past your thighs from your restless twisting and turning, Seto finally looked down at you from where he was sitting next to you on the bed, his typing momentarily ceasing.

“Where is it hurting?” he questioned, his voice rough, bordering on raspy.

“Where do you think?” you winced.

“Answer the question,” he snapped.

“My stomach, my back, my thighs, where doesn't it hurt,” you trailed off, sinking into self-pity and despair.

He circled an arm around your waist and pulling you roughly against him, drawing out a disapproving groan from you, as you prepared to ask him what the hell he was doing, only to be interrupted by something you've never dared to expect.

His left arm reached towards your lower back, applying pressure.

“Here?” he inquired monotonously, not looking away from his screen.

“A little lower,” you corrected, thoroughly bewildered, notifying with a small hum when his fingers graced over the pained area.

You couldn’t help but lay very still as his fingers firmly pressed against your back, massaging you.

“You can relax; you’re probably making it worse on yourself.” You heard the typing resume, though it was considerably less consistent. That being said, it was still beyond any speed you could manage with both hands.

You hadn’t realised you had stiffened against his touch, and you slowly attempted to comply, feeling the pain gradually lessen in intensity at his touch.

You woke up a second time to rhythmic typing against the poorly lit room; the golden glow of a lamp next to you paling against the darkness, while an irritating neon light tore through it on your other side.

You could still feel his fingers moving against your lower back as they had been when you last recalled before falling asleep.

“Seto, what time is it?” you mumbled, though you were certain the words were a lot more incoherent outside your head.

“Past six,” he offered flatly, his typing uninterrupted.

“Did you not sleep?”

“No.”

You turned your face to look over him. He was still in his clothes from the day before.

The dull pain the once unbearable cramps were reduced to, continued to linger.
“Have you been doing this since I fell asleep?” you asked apologetically.

“Doing what?” he questioned distractedly.

“Your hand – were you massaging my back this whole time?” you managed to inquire more coherently.

He released a low hum indicating yes, eyes refusing to leave his screen.

“Oh my god Seto, your fingers must be cramping,” you declared slightly frenzied, reaching for his hand, as if to inspect his fingers.

“Relax,” he drawled seemingly irritated by your fussing.

Supporting yourself up against the headboard, you watched him for a few moments, face aglow with the blue light pouring intensely out from the laptop screen; shadows cast over the deepened creases under his eyes. You suddenly felt very guilty.

“Seto, I’m so sorry.” He didn’t exactly need to or even want to hear your apology.

He didn’t respond, too absorbed in whatever was currently occupying his screen and in that next moment you did something that was probably the exact opposite of helpful to him, but you desperately needed to distract his attention away from his work if only for a moment as you severely feared for his health.

You didn’t exactly feel all that attractive in that moment, especially not in all your bloated glory – a distant part of your mind even going so far as to declare that you very possibly looked as if death had woken up, but you went for it regardless.

Reaching between his laptop and him, you forcefully took his lips in yours. He appeared stunned for a fleeting moment before you felt him set the laptop on the small nightstand beside him.

He allowed you to be in control for a short moment before beginning to roughly move his lips against yours. His hands slid to the back of your head and the small of your back as leaned over, laying you against the sheets.

His lips never left yours, his kiss growing increasingly more demanding. You could tell he was trying to be tender and loving, but he was much too impatient. The roughness of his kisses carried their own intoxicating appeal though, and you had grown to crave them.

Breaking away for air, as he lifted away, you impulsively moved with him; lips following his. You weren’t ready to let him go, desiring more.

Seto released a throaty laugh at your motion, fully comprehending its meaning.

He sat up, and a moment later you pushed yourself up to sit next to him. Clasping your arms around his neck, you forced yourself against his chest, his arms habitually wrapping around your back; though it was more likely reflexively given the rapidness of your motion.

You placed your lips over his, rolling them against his softly, while lifting his hand and bringing it against your breast. He didn’t respond, though his hand moved against you at first; a smirk spreading across his lips cunningly as deprived you of his indulgence. It took him another moment to learn that you wouldn’t be discouraged by this, leaning your weight carelessly against him.

He allowed himself to fall against the headboard with you over him before responding to your kiss.
Except your husband enjoyed being a tease, and he pulled you away from him almost immediately after beginning to kiss you.

“Don’t tease me when you can’t give me what I want,” he spoke huskily against your ear, leaning in. You physically restrained yourself from pouting. “What’s gotten into you?” he taunted, a ghost of a smile lingering on his slightly chapped lips.

“A girl can’t crave her husband?” you questioned, burying your face against his bare neck; your emboldened spirit betraying you as the words physically began to manifest outside your mind.

That earned you another deep chuckle.

“That’s hot,” he spoke mockingly, his low, deep voice furthering the effects of that sentence on you, as an electrifying chill pulsed down your spine, though you couldn’t be positive if that had been his intended effect.

“You need to get some sleep,” you declared seriously, after spending a few moments in silence against him. “Even half an hour will help,” you added hopefully.

“I have a meeting in less than that,” he refused. You sighed heavily, not concealing your disproval.

“Is this how – this isn’t going to – this isn’t good for you,” you stuttered, searching for an appropriate way to convey your point, only for it to produce itself in the most juvenile vocabulary possible.

“You know how people like us live,” he stated blandly, a lifeless tone to his words.

You couldn’t dispute this. You knew. In fact, it was rich coming from you considering this is exactly how you existed – it couldn’t exactly be considered living – but for whatever reason, you had grown to feel more strongly of his health and wellbeing than your own – as perhaps he had also of yours.

He removed himself from your embrace, walking towards the shower.

Slipping into the bathroom behind him while he showered, you began to get ready for the day also. Pulling your hair into a styled, messy pony tail by the base of your neck, you opted for a sultry make up look, with dark eyes and a rose-nude lip. You couldn’t be sure if Harada’s comment from the previous day regarding you doing little to lessen the age gap was influencing your choices or if it was an effort to feel more attractive given how unpleasant you currently felt.

When Seto stepped out of the shower in a towel, you were standing before the mirror, distractedly running your blush lipstick over your lips, still in your bra and underwear.

He looked you over, seemingly displeased.

“What?” you inquired after a few seconds, finally noticing his presence. “What is it you don’t like?” you elaborated. Please don’t make a comment about the bloating. “Is it the make up?” You didn’t regularly wear darker or heavier make up.

“What you usually do looks better,” he remarked in a clipped response.

“Is it bad?”

“No, you don’t look bad in much,” he paused to consider his words as he reached for his shaving cream, joining you in front of the mirror. “I just like seeing your face instead of all of that.”
Not entirely sure how to react to that half compliment followed by the brutal tear down of your current appearance, you remained silent.

“You look fine,” he finally sighed, judging your expression as he lathered the white foam over his face.

*Yeah, sure, now you backpedal.*

He was probably quite aware that you weren’t convinced, though not that it particularly bothered you.

Rummaging through your bags, you retrieved a dark, emerald green, thin, off the shoulder strapped dress. The heavy lace fabric fitted your waist beautifully, before flaring out in a fifties house-wife inspired twist at the waist, reaching just past your knees. The neckline in true retro fashion was fairly deep cut and displayed a tasteful amount of your chest.

Pairing the dress with a pair of nude, almond toed stilettos with an ankle strap which secured with a small gold buckle, you clasped a plain black choker around your waist, draping your hair off one side, over your bare shoulders.

Walking out of the bedroom, across his office, you slipped behind the secretaries’ desk. After fumbling with the awkward door knob on the door which led to the room where they prepared all of your husband’s coffee and whatever other refreshments for him and his guests, you scavenged the fridge for something to put together a decent breakfast for him.

Following a gruelling effort, which included almost burning yourself on scalding hot water, banging your engagement ring against the metal door of the fridge and writing in pain for a good five minutes from the resulting shockwave which pulsed through your finger and almost flipping yourself on your back over the slippery tile, you had put together, well, what you could, given the resources that were available to you.

*Why is everything such a fucking fiasco in this building,* you muttered to yourself as you entered your husband’s office, tray in hand.

He was already at his desk, laptop sitting in the center, as he poured over some paperwork, the sky behind him still dark.

Stepping behind his desk, you placed the tray carefully away from his paperwork.

“You should at least eat something,” you offered.

His eyes glance over the plate, consisting of a buttered croissant, a fruit salad you had roughly cut up, and a couple slices of French toast topped with blueberries. He seemed content until his eyes wandered over to the mug placed next to it. You saw those blue eyes visibly narrow as he stared into the dark liquid.

“I don’t drink tea,” he roughly declared.

“You do now. There’s no way you’re drinking coffee after staying up all night. You can fight me on that one.”

He looked up at you with a certain degree of animosity in his eyes as he studied you. His displeasure slowly turned to perplexity; likely at the authority you were asserting, before
reluctantly wrapped his fingers around the mug. As he brought the earl grey tea to his lips, eyes back to flying across the many lines of text on the document before him, you raised an eyebrow in anticipation.

“It’s hardly tolerable,” he stated, “at least it’s edible.”

You hadn’t with any seriousness expected him to so much as humour your bid, so you considered this an achievement of some sort.

He set down the mug without looking, left hand wrapping around your waist; pulling you onto his lap.

“Thank you,” he offered in a deep, almost velvety tone; his earlier raspy voice soothed by the tea. His eyes were firmly glued to the glowing screen before him.

An involuntary shudder pulsed through your body at how extremely close he had spoken against your ear.

He shifted his attention briefly towards the plate, the hand that had been holding your waist lifting to pick up the croissant. Assuming he was intending to eat it, you moved slightly sideways to your left against his arm, only for him to smother you with the pastry.

“It’s not poisoned,” you grumbled as you unwillingly chewed what he had managed to force in, attempting your best not to accidentally inhale the flakes.

“I didn’t assume it was,” he spoke tauntingly, before taking a bite from the same end, carelessly dropping pastry flakes all over your shoulder.

Dusting yourself off, and then proceeding to move the flakes off of him, you soon realized how pointless it was as more and more inevitably fell with each bite.

Seto insisted on sharing the breakfast with you, though you tactfully managed to eat as little as possible, having decided to pick something up from a café later. You were fairly certain this would be his only meal for the day until most likely dinner - knowing his tendency to get carried away with his work.

Turning your chin back to face him, he brushed off the corners of your lips with the back of his fingers before bringing his lips against yours.

It seemed the two of you were constantly fated to be interrupted however, as a knock sounded from the double doors. Whoever it was, their timing couldn’t have been any more impeccable.

Before the two of you could even pull away from each other, the doors swung open followed by an obnoxious voice greeting your husband, instantly putting Seto in a disagreeable mood.

You pulled away to face the older gentlemen whose greeting was abruptly cut short, with wide eyes. Seto released a low growl which expressed his intense displeasure from behind you. You weren’t certain if this was directed at the man whose voice seemed to travel through walls or the younger man you recognized all too well who stepped out from behind.

You imagined your husband’s eyes were narrowed to slits.

Frantically motioning to stand, you found yourself firmly held in place by your husband’s arm around your waist.
When his arm finally loosened, releasing you, you unsteadily pulled yourself to your feet, only to be twisted back towards him by your forearm, as he crushed his lips against yours for a brief moment. Parting from you, his smug expression spoke volumes.

Stepping away from where you had been sitting between his legs to stand beside him as gracefully as you could manage, you willed yourself to exchange your expression which was closely reminiscent of a deer in headlights for a more dignified one – only somewhat succeeding.

You would have made yourself scarce much earlier, had your husband’s hand not been so tightly encircling your wrist, discreetly behind the table, away from the view of the two directors who stood before you.

“We didn’t mean to interrupt,” the older gentlemen offered, visible trembling in your husband’s presence.

“I would hope not,” Seto bit back.

He didn’t bother with pleasantries or introductions; a silence reflected by Kaoru.

The environment was hostile and uncomfortable and you tactfully tugged your wrist, urging him to let go. His reaction was – purposely – delayed, as if to further assert his relationship with you, before releasing your hand, leaning forward on his own laced ones, inviting the men to speak.

…

“Miyuki, meet Ayumi, Ayumi, Miyuki,” you briefly introduced to each other the two women who were sitting across your desk – an unimpressed tone weighing your voice. “I’ll be frank;” you continued flatly, “this fiasco is dragging out for too long. You also know from the clearance I’ve granted you that Kodama’s records have been purged. Our entries from the earlier seventies and late sixties are incomplete. We’re missing crucial information. Intelligence I planted you specifically to find. We all aware you ladies aren’t sharing everything you know and it’s making me question your loyalties. I know you’re not telling me something, my question is what.”

The two young women before you appeared to be evidently unnerved by your hostile disposition and precise accusations.

You raised an eyebrow waiting for their response as they nervously glanced between each other, and you elected yourself to speak again.

“I’ve just come back from city hall. My mother’s family registry has more family members than I’m acquainted with. Ayumi, you did a background investigation on the family last week, what have you found?”

“Your mother had two older siblings, an older sister and a brother,” she began hesitantly, gathering her composure, “the brother disappeared around twenty years ago. A missing person’s report was filed, but nothing came of the investigation –”

“So technically he’s still missing? No body was recovered?” you interrupted in need of clarification.

“That’s correct, one night, he didn’t return home from work, never to be seen again. In his absence, the succession of the company was passed on to the eldest daughter, who abruptly vacated her position of vice-president, only three months into her accepting it. Her reasons are unknown. Your mother passed from health complications soon after.”
That explained the ridiculous rumour of a curse you’ve heard floating around the company building amongst the senior employees.

“Where is that aunt right now? The one who suddenly left her vice-presidency?”

“If she’s alive, she’s in hiding,” Ayumi explained. “I was unsuccessful in tracking her down. She may have emigrated.”

“I didn’t report this earlier because I couldn’t produce any evidence to support it,” Miyuki suddenly shared, “but I’ve overheard – going back to the purged reports, I’ve heard some of the executives frequenting the golf course being told by Wakamura that Kodama was standing on his life’s work, though - rather sitting on it because the corporation is blinded by moral obligation and doesn’t know how to apply the technology properly. From what I’ve understood, he was referring to the artificial intelligence program that was established in the seventies which is copyrighted to the company. It appears to be the last project he worked on before being dismissed.”

“And you dismissed such crucial information without bringing it to my attention why?”

“My apologies, I couldn’t procure a voice recording or any supporting information –” she attempted to defend.

“Had this mission not been outside of your job description, you’d be on probation for this, possibly fired; do you understand the severity of what you’ve done? You’ve allowed my husband and I to be exposed to this threat while missing critical information for much longer than necessary!” you raged, unintentionally reducing the poor woman into a fit of trembling. “Sorry,” you finally sighed, attempting to smoothen the edge to your tone. “You’ve worked hard, both of you. I’m giving you a paid vacation, go somewhere safe while this blows over, and please, I’m not in the mood for formalities, take it while I’m offering it to you.”

You couldn’t be bothered with the fake, back and forth, polite refusals.

The two women vacated your office shortly after, and you made a note to yourself to make a stop at Kodama, on your way back to Kaiba Corp. that night.

…

Peering into Seto’s office that night, you were relieved to see that he was alone.

Perhaps because it was so late, you noticed he had changed out of his suit and into a pair of black pants and a black shirt which bordered so closely to being a turtle neck that it was aggravating. What was more aggravating was how attractive he made an almost-turtleneck look. He had no business doing such preposterous things. Rude.

“Can I borrow you for a minute?” you asked him, setting down the laptop you had been carrying, next to his.

“What is it?” he inquired, suddenly concerned, your apprehensive tone immediately obtaining his undivided attention. He was leaning forward, his finger entwined under his chin, eyes narrowed.

“Read this code for me and tell me what its function is?” You weren’t entirely sure if that request made much sense. What you were aware of was how selfish it was to ask this of him when he was already drowning in work. “I know you’re really busy, but I wouldn’t bring it up if it wasn’t important.”

He didn’t question you further as you typed your access codes in, reserving himself to watching
with a stern gaze the many security firewalls you were bypassing.

Turning the laptop towards him, he drew it closer to himself, eyes flying intently over the rows of virtually endless lines of code.

“This is from Kodama’s artificial intelligence project?” he questioned, eyes narrowing even further, forehead creasing and blue eyes darkening unreadably.

You responded with a faint nod.

“Lock the door,” he commanded, a frightening edge to his tone, “Now!”
Seto's being an ass, the reader is being difficult, nothing to see here.

This is, I'm sure as you can tell, coming to an end, and I was considering writing a continuation - a very brief one - following the conclusion of the main plot to capture the issues they encounter following the marriage becoming public, but I would like to hear what you think!

Also, it has come to my attention that my writing is sometimes lacking as of late, especially in the editing department, but simply for time's sake I'm forced to choose between putting out an imperfect chapter or not having one up for a good week, so I hope you do bear that in mind and thank you for pointing the obvious ones out so I can fix it for the better :)

It was concealed exceptionally well, but his voice held consternation. Had this been earlier in your relationship, you may well have not recognized it. Except you did recognize it, and the notion that there was something threatening enough to force your husband in to a state of discomposure was enough to disconcert you thoroughly.

Stumbling over your own heels as you traversed the room to the double doors, you could feel a wave of needles prickling from under your skin, chilling you.

He had fallen into his usual attitude of resting his chin against his entwined fingers, narrowed blue eyes reflecting the lighter blue screen, you observed as you returned to his side from the locked doors.

“What was Kodama developing this technology for?” he inquired grimly.

“For a MMORPG, you should be able to find the files from the initial developmental stages in there,” you responded, speaking every word with extreme caution for some reason, voice barely registering above a whisper.

“What was it about?” he vaguely questioned, as his fingers flew over the keys in search of what you had mentioned.

“It was some uh – strategizing game, players had to strategically plan military strikes against some alien race in a dystopian – possibly post-apocalyptic – world, in an alternate universe if you will,” you stuttered, summarising what little you had cared to retain of your briefing many months ago.

“That sounds about right,” he spoke lowly, “except, in the right hands, this artificial intelligence program could remotely launch government missiles through manipulating their satellites. It can manipulate governments into going to war with each other. Whoever is in possession of this draws the line between world peace and nuclear annihilation.”

Eyes flicking up to him in absolute horror, you laid a hand over his shoulder to stabilize yourself.

“Now that nonsense about selling to the highest bidder makes sense,” he muttered under his breath,
though more to himself.

“What?”

“I’m sure by now you’ve figured out who’s behind all this.” You simply nodded in response. “Wakamura, I heard he’s been going around bragging to his goons about how he’s about to come into possession of a state of the art weapon that he will soon be auctioning off to the highest bidder. I imagine you can comprehend who the potential bidders will be.”

“Foreign governments?”

“Precisely.”

“You’re certain about this?” you questioned hesitantly. It was not that you doubted his abilities, and you were certain he was well aware of this, you were in denial and hoping that his answer may somehow differ if you asked a second time.

“I wish I could give you a different answer,” he stated in a voice which sounded strained in an unsuccessful attempt to be gentler. “I’m certain, because years ago, there were a few virtual reality programs I wrote that Gozaburo tried to use for a similar application. Different technology, though the concept remains the same.”

His voice was dark and evidently clouded with deep resentment. This was all the confirmation you needed – and had the liberty to ask for – for you knew if he was willingly discussing the topic of his step-father, a demon from a very dark and guarded part of his past, he wasn’t considering the matter lightly.

“Can you hold on to this?” you asked of him shakily.

“As the president of Kaiba Corp. I shouldn’t have seen this,” he pointed out.

“As my husband, I’m asking you, as my husband, can you please safeguard this?” you pleaded in desperation. “No one will know you have it, it won’t be a threat to your safety, not more than the situation already is, I can guarantee that. This will still be on me –”

He sighed as he rubbed his temples.

“Is this the only copy?” he asked interrupting.

“Yes.”

“How can you be sure?”

“The code was only completed after the acquisition, and no copies were made since I took over.”

“What I’m concerned about, isn’t my safety, it’s yours. I am more than capable of handling myself. You, now, I can’t let out of my sight. This needs to be destroyed. I can’t risk letting you out of my sight until we do.”

His words made perfect sense, and his concern; great enough to destroy ground breaking technology that quite literally possessed the ability to change the course of world history was touching – most men of his stature would have sought to create profit - and yet you couldn’t bring yourself to agree.

“That’s my grandfather’s life’s work,” you softly countered, “every member of my family; this is
what they died because of.”

These godforsaken lines of disjointed letters and symbols, that’s what was responsible for this series of seemingly unending misfortune that had existed long before you and threatened to continue long after you and it was truly infuriating. Rationally speaking, it should have been reason in itself, not even considering the larger, global threat it posed, to incline you to destroy it, but you faltered.

“Exactly, all the more reason for this to be destroyed and a public announcement to be made following. I will not allow you, my wife to die guarding some dead old man’s legacy. This has got to go,” he growled, tightening a hand around your wrist.

“Seto –”

“You asked me to take care of this as your husband, well that’s what I’m doing. I told you I wouldn’t do anything you didn’t want me to, well here’s the exception.”

This was perhaps the most inconvenient moment of your life to be incapacitated by a menstrual cramp, and yet it wasn’t like your rationality and the rest of your body had some agreement, so you held your hand up interrupting your husband as you felt a sensation akin to lightening pass through you.

Crouching down immediately where you stood, holding on to the edge of his desk with the hand he wasn’t currently holding captive, a drawn out grasp escaped you while you waited for the pain to subside.

“What is it?” Seto questions gruffly, apparently oblivious.

“Nothing, keep going,” you said, drawing a large breath as the crippling sensation faded to dull throbbing again, allowing you to stand up.

He eyes studied you skeptically for a few moments before what seemed like realization dawned over him and his scowl hardened over his concern.

“Like I said, we’re destroying this.”

You wouldn’t respond, neither to dispute him nor agree, and you could see the exasperation threaten to boil over on his face.

“Whatever sentimental value you’re guarding this with is childish. You’re being short sighted. I’ve blown up an entire island burying garbage like this and I did it without second thoughts,” he declared in a frightening tone, “You want to know why? Because there are certain directions this world should never go down and this is one of them. I fail to comprehend your hesitation,” he barked, before dropping his voice to barely above a whisper, “what part of global, nuclear meltdown is slipping past your hundred and forty-five IQ?”

You weren’t sure yourself.

Had the situation been less dire, perhaps your husband openly declaring that he destroyed a bloody island without second thoughts would have fazed you more.

Resembling a deer in headlights seemed to be an expression you were fond of as of late.

“You truly are a child,” he finally spat, snapping the laptop closed before proceeding to pack it into his brief case. “We’re going home,” he abruptly declared standing up.
“Weren’t you preoccupied?”

“Salvaging my wife’s brain from the depths of idiocy is more pressing at the moment to me. Let’s go,” he ordered, dragging you behind him by the hand.

The drive home was silent, on your part at least. Seto made a few pointed remarks about the situation, most of them criticizing your indecision.

Pulling into the garage, he was swift to swing around the front of the car to your side, briefcase in hand. By the time you had picked up your bag, your door was already being held open.

Stepping out, the manner in which he carried you off away from the vehicle, you worried would cause your ankles to sprain over your needle thin heels.

Turning away from the hallway which you usually took to access the manner, he led you down a darkened corridor which seem to stretch endlessly into the bowels of, well, the earth for all you were concerned.

“Where are we going?” you demanded to know firmly. He wouldn’t answer. “Seto, where are we?” you questioned again, tugging your arm towards yourself quite aggressively.

This achieved the intended purpose of gaining his attention, as he abruptly stopped; turning towards you, though his grip on your arm remained.

“Why, is the darkness scaring you?”

You didn’t appreciate the derision in his tone.

“No more than your condescending attitude towards me is.”

He directed a pointed glare at you. He set down his briefcase momentarily as he retrieved his phone from his trouser pocket.

“Hold this,” he ordered as he handed his phone to you after rapidly tapping his fingers across the screen for a few moments. You snatched the phone from his fingers, a glare reflecting his, as you shone the flashlight, illuminating the hallway ahead shrouded in complete darkness.

You were still averse to walking down that stretch of corridor.

“There’s no way,” you disputed.

He smothered a groan as he released your wrist.

Receiving this as permission to walk away, you almost turned to leave before he snaked his arm around your waist, before dragging you forward without sparing a moment.

Strangely enough, forcefully pressed against his side, the experience was less petrifying.

“Not many things can touch you if you’re standing next to me,” he declared confidently, his tone differing greatly from the state of discomposure he had momentarily been in earlier that evening.

“I’m assuming nuclear warfare is the exception,” you asked quietly.

“Why are you being difficult if you understand?”

There was nothing worth voicing, so you remained silent.
Descending a series of stairs, the two of you arrived shortly at a metal door which resembled the vault doors at your Swiss bank.

Your husband stepped forward, allowing for a laser to scan his iris. A robotic voice spoke his name stiffly before the door unlocked.

“Where exactly is this?” you inquired, slightly unsettled.

“Under the front garden of the mansion. Stand here,” he ordered.

It was deeply disturbing on many fronts that your husband felt the need to have a maximum security vault of sorts buried stories under the property that required biometric information to access. You found yourself questioning what sort of life he had been leading up till now, because clearly, this room didn’t seem to serve the purpose of leisure. The man didn’t know the word.

“Did you not hear me?” he growled, “stand here so I can enter your data.”

“I heard you the first time,” you snapped.

“Could have fooled me.”

Following the unsurprisingly convoluted process of having your biometrics registered, he basically shoved you into the room, which could hardly be titled a room when it was basically a massive supercomputer encompassing the entire space.

It whirred to life at Seto’s voice command and a voice as obnoxious as its size – and attitude - were large, greeted him, while not missing a beat before inquiring who the ‘pretty lady’ standing next to him was.

How lovely.

Seto didn’t bother responding, as he retrieved your laptop from his briefcase and connected it to the computer. He transferred the original versions of all the files from your company mainframe into the supercomputer before locking it.

“Now only you or I have access to this information,” he informed, “I’ve granted your request. Now, let’s have a conversation about this where you aren’t being thoughtless child.”

“So basically a conversation where I agree unconditionally to all your arguments.”

It was painfully obvious he didn’t appreciate that answer.

He stood up wordlessly before stalking out of the room. He stopped briefly at the door, glancing in your direction with another pointed glare. Understanding this as a rather impolite invitation to follow him before he abandons you in the dark, you made haste to catch up to his side, grabbing on to his sleeve for good measure.

The two of you may not have been on speaking – polite speaking at least – terms; but you weren’t about to disadvantage yourself.

You’ve learned living with him that pride only served its purpose when you had the upper hand.

Emerging out of a stairwell into a corridor you actually recognized, you finally released your grip from around his arm.

Fighting the urge to walk away from the currently brooding, arrogant gentleman that was your
husband – though really the arrogance was a permanent fixture on his disposition – you followed after him.

You idly grind your heel into the hardwood of the hallway as he twisted the brass knob of a rather old, weathered door you’ve never previously cared to explore on the ground level of the mansion.

Walking in, it was the size of an auditorium or a fairly large gymnasium, with white washed walls reaching a ceiling placed on level with at least the third floor of the mansion.

There was a faded gold railed, winding staircase to the left of the door past a few short steps, on the second level of the main floor of the room. The staircase led to a balcony like walkway which bordered the perimeter of the room roughly a story above.

Bookcases, much like those in your husband’s study adorned all the walls both on the main floor and opposite the balcony, occasionally punctuated by the white carvings of the walls which were visible in between the dark wood.

There was a distinct mustiness lingering in the air.

To the far right of the door, on the adjacent wall was an aged, unused fireplace with tattered, hardbound books littering its mantle and surrounding area, the white paint peeling off its Versailles inspired carvings, a large gold framed mirror hanging over it. The door was faced by a series of massive French windows lining the entirety of the opposing wall. It was the only wall without bookshelves. The room stretched further left of the door than it did right, separating into three levels, you noticed; the main level you were standing on now, the second one elevated by a few steps which held the winding stairwell, and finally the third level again raised by a few steps stretching the width of the room, which led to a single, olive green hued tufted sofa. Similar to the fireplace, there were very old, some possibly moth eaten books stacked by its gold carved feet.

Walking under one of the many great crystal chandeliers cascading from the ceiling, up to the large, golden, carved terrestrial globe supported on dark washed oak legs, you were at least mildly impressed. Perhaps the manor wasn’t all bleak and austere as you had condemned it to be; perhaps it did contain some charm.

“It’s like eighteenth century France threw up all over this place,” you noted absentmindedly – mostly to yourself, as you traced a finger along one of the polished golden metal axis which circled the globe.

“There are four other libraries in the manor if this one is not to your liking,” your husband noted, seemingly offended as he stood next to you, before reaching towards the edge of the globe, and sliding what constituted the northern hemisphere sideways, revealing a collection of aged liquors.

You hadn’t considered ever that he was particularly partial to drinking, especially since you’ve only seen him drinking on the one occasion and that was at your penthouse.

“You drink?”

“I try not to.”

“I rather you not.”

“I’m sorry but right now, I’m not up for a negotiation.” His tone was unusually harsh in that he's hardly addressed you that way.
That exchange went over about as well as a bucket of bricks.

He reached for one of the perfectly polished glasses, pouring himself a full glass of whiskey.

You watched him take a large sip, expression contorting vaguely at the taste.

You inhaled sharply before exhaling pointedly out in disproval.

The glass was empty as soon as he had filled it and again, and again.

You stood by him stiffly, a mixture of fear as well as anxiety of the state your husband was currently, quite willingly reducing himself to, plaguing your thoughts.

As he poured himself what was his fourth or perhaps fifth – you had lost count – glass, you walked over to sit by the short steps which led up to the sofa.

“There are things I can handle,” he began, swirling the amber liquid that seemed to drown everything it kissed in a bitter aroma, in his glass. “In fact, there are not many things in this world I cannot handle with my wealth and influence. Nuclear warfare threatening human life on this planet on a global scale, contrary to what you may think of me, is in fact beyond me.”

“You’re overreacting,” you disputed, as he walked past you to sit on the sofa.

“You’re too young to see the repercussions,” he dismissed. “Come here.”

“I rather not.”

“Come here,” he repeated more sternly. You could hear the alcohol seeping into his system, and you could now tell that this was his attempt at drowning out the issue that was clearly deeply unnerving him.

“I don’t like men who drink.”

“The only reason I haven’t destroyed that program is out of respect for you, but don’t mistake my inaction for hesitance or a change of heart. I will dismantle that program before sunrise; I just want you – us to be on the same page. And I don’t drink often so come here,” he barked.

Standing up to face him, you approached him, intending to confront him.

“So how’s that respecting me then if your decision ultimately remains unchanged?”

“Why are you so intent on keeping the damn thing that’s tearing this family apart?” he inquired accusingly.

“It doesn’t make sense,” you said in thought.

“What doesn’t?”

“Why the expelled board members didn’t take a copy of the incomplete code. The takeover was fairly quick but it still took many months. If they had enough time to wipe records, they surely anticipated what was coming. For a group planning treason, I hardly think copyright issues were a concern.”

He reached his hand unsteadily up to yours, pulling you into him. His eyes were clouded. His scent masked in a sickening bitterness. You stumbled forward before catching yourself and rolling over to sit next to him.
“Few reasons. The code in its incomplete state is as useless as it is in its complete form without a computer advanced enough to run the program. Even Kodama doesn’t possess what is necessary to run the program for the purpose Wakamura and his underlings intend on applying the code for; thus why they requested government funding. My guess is that’s the reasons they’re after Kaiba Corp. because we do,” he explained, taking another sip, and effectively downing another glass. “One’s useless without the other. Also, they never planned on you living for very long following the takeover; they overestimated themselves, or rather they underestimated you and by extension me.”

You observed in dismay his senses and wits dulling, though he continued.

“You must understand the devastation this is capable of,” he questioned, forcing you to hold his gaze. “Men like Wakamura will find a way to come into possession of this so long as this exists. Evil is inherently drawn to evil. Prevention is better than foolishly looking for a cure.”

The distress in your eyes were met with a hazy blankness in his blue ones.

He stood up, presumably to re-fill his glass before you held on to him.

“For god’s sake, that’s enough,” you shouted.

“Let go,” he commanded icily.

“No,” you defied, standing up behind him, reaching for the glass, which he easily held out of reach.

“What,” he began, placing great emphasis on the word, “exactly is your obsession with the blasted program? You weren’t intending on using it anyway, you said so yourself. Your grandfather would hardly have wanted this to used —”

“And yet he didn’t destroy it did he?”

“He was being foolish!” he bellowed, “which is also what you’re being.”

“How dare you!” you screamed in response. “You can insult me but what right do you have to belittle my family?”

“How dare I? As your husband, I think I have every right,” he countered, almost hysterical.

“You think being married to me grants you permission to disrespect my family?”

“What family?” he raged, “I’m the only family you got now!”
"Let's make one thing crystal fucking clear, you could be the last man on earth, or the king of it in fact, which clearly is what you think you are, and you still won't have the right to insult my family. Ever. You might be my only family now, but that doesn't erase the great legacy my grandfather and the rest of them have left behind. I'm not some orph-"

You caught yourself, though his eyes narrowed. You had almost let slip that you weren't some orphan with no pedigree that he had picked up off the streets, before realizing the severity of those words.

Those words would surely have ended your marriage.

"What?" He barked, clearly suspicious, though fortunately for you, in his intoxicated state, he wasn't as perceptive as he usually was.

"Nothing," you swallowed.

He opened his mouth to say something, before pausing in thought. He pressed his ring finger against the corner of his eye, holding what seemed to be a throbbing headache at bay.

He sighed.

"The dead have no place in the present, and especially not the future. They're part is long over. The living must continue living, and if you let yourself be restrained by the shadows of the departed, it's going to haunt you for the rest of your life." His voice was gentle. It was forced, clearly, but gentle nonetheless. His next words were not. "I'm certainly not about to make a decision in the best interest of my wife's deceased grandfather. That sounds nonsensical even just saying it. I'm going to make it in your best interest, that's my duty to you as your husband. Protecting you even from yourself at times like this. Don't be difficult."

"Can I be honest with you?" He simply watched. "I don't want to deal with any of this. I just want to be married to you, have a normal life and not spend every waking moment ridden with anxiety."

"Our daily lives could hardly be considered normal," he interjected.

You allowed a small smile.

"I suppose not."

"I'm bringing this unhinged circus to an end tonight," he said, "I have nothing to gain from misleading you, so just give me your word so I can get it over with."

"Alright," you conceded in a small voice looking away at your feet.

He staggered forward a step, before wrapping an arm over your shoulders, pulling you flat against his chest; you chin forced upwards.

His breath reeked of whiskey, drowning your senses in an acidic bitterness. You scrunched your nose but made no effort to pull away.

He looked down at you with a blank expression, though behind it you liked to think there was some affection that was presently eluding you.
Stepping away from you he set his glass down on the rounded, antique wooden teapoy by the arm of the sofa.

"Let's go," he called, making to walk away, his left hand pressed against his temple in an attempt to stabilize himself.

"Go where?" You questioned, faintly supporting him by his folded elbow.

"Were you not listening?"

"To erase the code?"

"What do you think."

"You have a very high alcohol tolerance, I admit, but you need to eat something because you're going to leave loose ends working like that," you countered.

"I don't make mistakes," he asserted in a growl, looking down at you and allowing the arm of the elbow you were holding fall to his side.

"That's the intoxication talking," you insisted, pulling on his arm as he motioned to walk away.

"You're stalling," he accused, his voice echoed off the book lined walls, reverberating through the hall, as he attempted to free his arm from you by jerking it sharply. He was clearly unaware of his own strength or unable to control it in his present state because the motion sent you flying backwards towards the sofa, the lower back of your head hitting against the inner wooden frame.

A distinct, dull cracking noise rippled through the vast space.

A clipped cry escaped you as your hand flew to clasp the back of your neck, your body arching at the agonizing sensation.

The reaction to the unexpected sequence of events from your husband was delayed, though when the situation finally registered, he called your name with visible concern as he launched forward towards you.

It was obviously unintentional, but you snapped.

"Don't touch me," you shrieked, batting off his hands. He didn't resist, hands falling away as you stood up. He rose with you. "This is why I hate men who drink," you spoke with disdain, before pushing past him and leaving him alone in the library, hand firmly clutching your sore neck.

... You awoke to the sensation of pressure against your skin.

Last you recalled, you had stormed out of the library, and changing into a silk nightie, buried yourself under the sheets of your bed.

Reluctant to open your eyes, you could already smell your husband's natural scent; which these days was mostly coffee, though the aftershave or cologne or whatever it was still faintly present. In this moment however, a pungent mint odour was overwhelming.

Forcing your eyes halfway open, you were faced with the familiar sight of your husband's chest.

"I'm sorry," he husked from above you. Those words could hardly ever be heard from him, though
even still, they were usually spoken in some derogatory, sarcastic remark. "I would never intentionally hurt you. We need to go have it examined for a potential concussion."

The more he spoke the more the initially perplexing mint odour made sense. He had probably attempted to drown out the aroma of alcohol you hated so much with what you assumed was mouthwash or possibly toothpaste.

"You're overreacting again," you finally spoke. "I'm fine."

"I took care of the AI program, and anything the code ever touched. Your laptop included," he explained after a few moments. "This won't make you happy but I swept Kodama's main frame for anything related to be sure also. Is there any more loose ends you care to point out?"

He was thorough, you would admit, not that you would ever have had any doubt had he been in a sober state. He was also infinitely better versed with computers than you, or anyone else on the planet, you were convinced, but he lacked sorely in common decency and that was what was currently inspiring your aggravation.

"I was looking out for your health," you bit back.

"I can take care of myself, and you," he asserted, evidently offended.

"My aching neck begs to differ."

"It won't happen again," he affirmed gruffly.

It would be beneath you to continue this pointless spat, so you conceded.

"Wait, did you say you hacked into my company database?"

"Does it surprise you? It shouldn't. As advanced as your network security is - "

"Let me guess, it was still child's play?"

"Exactly."

You pick your battles. Fighting Seto Kaiba over his technological prowess is not a hill you wanted to die on.

One hand gripping his shirt, you lay there for a long moment, waiting for the tidal wave of dread and fear that currently had you transfixed to subside. It was truly horrifying and in every way daunting what you were facing, you realized, and with the ground for battle below your feet, and the end obscure, you were indescribably afraid.

Tightening your grip on his shirt as you pulled yourself upwards into him, you lifted your head, placing it against his bare neck, one hand slipping past his collarbones and under his collar.

"Hold me," you told him.

"I'm already holding you," he replied almost monotonously.

"Tighter."

"You do this when you're scared," he noted, a little more colour in his voice. "Though, if you come any closer you'll be inside my shirt," he added, prying your hand away before peeling you away from him completely and placing you on your own pillow.
That stung.

He reached a hand under the neckline of your nightgown, wiping his hand against your cleavage up to the depression of your right collarbone.

"My point, you're already sweating."

Oh, so you were.

He watched you for a moment, and your expression must have contorted in a way which somehow struck a chord with him because he sighed, and began to undo his buttons.

"Come here," he offered unexpectedly, allowing his shirt to hang open.

You hesitated only for a moment as you allowed his words to reassemble themselves in your mind before drawing yourself forward into his arms, your right hand slipping under his open shirt to be splayed against his back.

Pressing your cheek against his bare chest, your head against the crook of his neck, feeling his bare skin on yours had the effect of drowning out all your anxious thoughts into white noise, and it afforded a moment of sanity to you who always seemed to be standing on the edge of a crumbling cliff.

What you likely didn't consider was that maybe, just maybe it had the same effect on him.

Your legs tangling together, you felt his hands tighten around your back, as if to oblige.

You would have easily drifted to sleep were you not so intently forcing yourself to stay awake.

A long silence endured, though it was comfortable.

"I'm hungry," you finally stated, no longer able to suppress the demands of your growling stomach.

He pulled away slightly, looking down at you, clearly not having expected that.

Without questioning you or making some sarcastic remark as you had expected of him, he swiftly pulled apart from you completely, slipping out from under the covers and walking around the emperor size bed in long strides.

In the lamp lit room, as you watched him, you wondered perhaps if you had been selfish to trouble him as you did.

He would be turning twenty-nine this year and though he was still young – young enough in appearance to easily be mistaken for being your age had people not known better – you could see the fatigue beginning to sink into his chiseled features. A part of you knew that when the launch was over and he fell back into his regular routine, he would recover from his current state, but you found yourself worrying needlessly.

…

Sitting at the head of the glass table, you pulled your feet up to your chest, hugging them.

Seto slipped the black silk strap that had slid past your shoulder back over as he walked past you to the fridge.

Retrieving some dishes the kitchen staff had wrapped and left earlier that evening, he warmed up
the contents, before portioning them on to two plates.

“That looks unappetizingly healthy,” you noted as you watched him

"You're such a child."

"Oh give it a rest, am not. You're no better than the media."

"Whatever you say, kid."

"Excuse me?"

"The things you ask me for remind me of the things Mokuba used to ask me for when he was a child," he remarked snidely. You merely raised an eyebrow in response, urging him to elaborate. "Dinner at odd hours of the night, you insist junk like pizza is real food," he hesitated as if tasting his next words, "he also used to ask to be held when he was scared..." There was a tinge of sadness in those words.

"Are you insinuating that I'm his replacement?"

That earned you a smirk.

"I wouldn't say that, your motives are obviously very different from his."

"Are you suggesting I only ask to be held to get in your pants?” You demanded to know, narrowing your eyes. Though you had to admit, that question posed itself considerably more bluntly than you had intended to.

"I don't recall making such a statement," he feigned innocence - or whatever was the alternative replacement in his case - as he set down your plate in front of you, taking a seat beside you as he did.

You allowed the silence to reign for a few, long moments.

"That's not it," you finally admitted uneasily, "truth be told, I genuinely draw comfort from being around you." You wouldn't look at him as you spoke. "It makes me feel invincible somehow, like nothing or no one could touch me."

"That's because they can't," he gruffly interjected.

Reaching across the table for his hand, past his plate, you allowed a small smile to tug at your lips as you continued.

"Don't laugh at me, I don't myself know when it started. Maybe it's because you raised Mokuba and I - I never really had a father figure in my life, the president who took me in, as great a man as he was and I'm sure he saw me as a daughter, but he wasn't very affectionate thinking about it now. I didn’t see affection as something I needed, if I even knew what it meant back then. He filled every obligation, though he - you get the idea," you sighed. Out of the corner of your eye, you noticed him nodding faintly. "And please don't take this the wrong way, don't think I have my feelings confused because I don't, but I feel you've become that figure for me."

"A father?" He questioned, though there was a certain sense of understanding.

"Just, a very strong pillar in my life."

"And yet you try to do everything yourself.”
You laughed wryly at that.

"Because I worry," you confessed, great sadness overcoming you, "that someday when I'm older, when you think I'm capable of fending for myself, you won't see me with those same sentiments. Charm is fickle," people were fickle, "and I'll outgrow your perception of beauty and no longer fulfil your physical needs and- " you squeezed your eyes closed, failing sorely to trap the tears which you felt trailing your cheeks, "and since our marriage it hasn't even been half a year, but I don't know what I'll do without you, I don't know what I'll do with myself when you leave -"

"When I leave?" He interrupted harshly, "what exactly have I done to give you that impression? I think you've grossly misread our relationship and quite frankly it offends me. I've never abandoned something I've taken responsibility over in my life, and whether you're twenty or fifty, my opinion of you will remain unchanged." You slowly raised your eyes to meet his; his blue eyes were burning. "You're not some escort; you have no physical obligations to fulfil. I'm not some depraved beast. This is not some infatuated affair, when you age, so will I, almost a decade ahead of you in fact, will you see me as some old man then?"

"Of course not," you defended.

"Then shove that holier than thou attitude back to wherever it came from because I don't want to hear about it again. This whole relationship, you've been the one asking to leave, I've never considered such thoughts and don't plan on it. I think we've been together for long enough for you to let go of your insecurities. I've seen all there is to see and I'm still here."

His words were more a sucker punch today than a mere slap in the face.

"Your words are harsh," you stated quietly.

"They were words you needed to hear."

"Maybe."

He reached over somewhat reluctantly, wiping your trails of fresh tear stains with his thumb. You remained extremely still.

"Eat before it gets cold," he ordered flatly, as he leaned away.

"What are we going to do about Wakamura?" You questioned eventually, as you complied.

"I'll take care of it."

"I can help."

"You I don't want anywhere near this fight," he asserted firmly.

"I'm not a child Seto, and I'm certainly not your child. I'm your wife, and I don't know what type of women you've been with before me -"

"Stop that," he ordered cutting you off.

"What?"

"You keep talking about women I've been with before you. I haven't. What makes you think I've had the time for such trivial pursuits?"

That unwittingly brought a smile to your face.
"What are you smiling about?" He demanded to know, clearly irritated.

"I'm glad then."

It took a while for comprehension of your odd declaration to transform his quizzical expression.

"You're such an idealist," he spat, almost as if to indicate the notion disgusted him.

You observed him for a while.

"If we think the same way, which I think we do, you're planning to indict Wakamura and those associated with him for treason. Except you don't at the moment have anything - besides a vague concept, of who exactly is involved in his extensive network, as far as evidence goes anyway."

He looked up at you, a rare expression of mild surprise at your bold assertion playing in his face.

"I do. That evidence - I have it."

The evidence you had gradually gathered over the months of the members of various director boards, both yours, his, and Seto's would be more than sufficient to legally prove the group's connection with each other. The exchange of capital would only fortify it.

"I assumed that's what you were doing," he finally spoke, "we still need to be sure that there are records and ledgers of his communications with foreign governments and seize them before demanding a search and seizure order from the prosecutor's office."

"You have men in his corporation don't you? - don't ask me how I know that and don't shoot the messenger, I have my ways."

Again, he seemed to be mildly surprised at the confession. Clearly, even your husband had made the mistake of underestimating you.

"That's exactly what I plan on doing," he confirmed, his eyes were sharp and threatening in thought.

"Seto - " you asked after a few moments, curiosity getting the better of you, "how did you know what my exact IQ was?"

"You didn't think I would marry a woman who would become the mother of my children without confirming such a basic detail did you?"

"So you married me after confirming our IQs matched?"

"Don't insult me, yours doesn't compare to mine."

Yours was already considered to be at a near genius level, so that would only prove what you had already assumed of him, but the argument of how he had addressed the issue was not a rabbit hole you were willing to go down. Besides, a man with such a superior intellect was attractive, you forced yourself to consider, in a desperate attempt to suppress the urge to brutally, verbally tear him to pieces.

_So much for being his equal._

...

“Have you seen my navy cufflinks?” you heard Seto call from the walk in closet.
You sighed as you looked up from your tablet, focusing your attention away from the email that had previously been occupying it. It was barely six and the man already sounded acutely irritated.

“Which ones?” you responded from where you were sitting on the bed.

The question was well warranted. The man owned one navy pair of cufflinks for each day of the year. You didn’t think you could possibly calculate how many he owned if you were to broaden the category to how many blue ones he owned, so you wondered how he kept track of each one.

“Never mind,” you heard him growl dismissively, apparently annoyed by your question which he conveyed to be a nuisance.

“Do you think you left it in the office?” you questioned as he emerged in a tailored navy suit over a white dress shirt from the wardrobe, a different set of navy cufflinks – you assumed - studding his white sleeves, socks and dress shoes slung from his fingers.

“No.”

“Maybe it’s somewhere in your bags,” you offered.

“I packed my own bags; I’m more than capable of remembering what I put in there,” he snapped.

You couldn’t be sure why he was seemingly so attached to the pair.

“Did you particularly like those?”

“Mokuba got them for me.”

*Asked and answered.*

“Oh, I’m sorry; I can try to look for them for you if you tell me what they look like?”

“I hardly think you could find them if I couldn’t.”

*You did ask if I had seen them though? What’s with that?*

Swallowing that thought instead of voicing it as you would have much rather liked, you fixated your attention back on the screen of your tablet.

“I’m leaving now,” he informed, walking up to you from where he had been tying his shoe laces at the foot of the bed by your feet.

He leaned over to you, who was still in your nightgown, when a knock sounded from the door. Still leaned over you, his hands anchored on either side of your legs, he called out for the person behind the door to enter.

The door opened to reveal a maid whose name you couldn’t recall, but recognized by her fairly large eyes. Her eyes always seemed to hold a certain unrestrained contempt, or perhaps animosity towards you. It was apparent she didn’t like you.

Seto stood away from you, waiting for her to speak.

She bowed, pointedly in Seto’s direction, furthering your stance that she wasn’t particularly fond of you. She held up a collection of garment bags.

“The dry cleaning arrived yesterday evening,” she explained and you motioned for her to come in,
but as expected, she glanced in your husband’s direction for approval.

Stepping off the bed, you set your tablet on the nightstand as you interjected her as she made to walk towards the closet to hang the clothing.

“Is a pink dress in there, or are they all his suits?” you asked, and wordlessly she handed you one of the many black bags.

A distant corner of your subconscious wondered how she had known that right away. Slightly more interested in having your dress back though, your excitement overshadowing your otherwise sharp intuition. You carried it back to the bed, laying it down.

You observed the maid disappear into the closet as you unzipped the bag. The dress was hung backwards from the hanger, which again you thought odd, and slipping it out of the confines of the bag, you gasped in dismay as you noticed the light silk fabric of the ruffled dress frayed and separated from the zipper around the mid-back.

“It’s torn,” you told Seto, who was reaching for his briefcase.

“What?” he questioned in confusion. “It must have worn,” he observed from behind you.

“It’s Versace, it doesn’t simply wear,” you disagreed, “I’ve worn this once. This was intentionally cut.”

“How would I know?” he scoffed, “You expect me to remember every expendable thing that’s on my payroll?”

“Is it from this season?” Seto inquired, dismissing your conspiracy theory.

“Yes.”

“I’ll buy you another one,” he simply offered.

“It’s fine,” you sighed, “I already wore it to a company dinner, I guess I’m over it.”

Trailing the maid that was discreetly leaving the wardrobe with your eyes for a moment, you turned your attention back to your husband.

“What’s her name?” you asked; your voice audible enough to be heard by her.

“How would I know?” he scoffed, “You expect me to remember every expendable thing that’s on my payroll?”

Ouch.

“You there,” you called, after a moment’s hesitation on how to properly address her, demanding her attention, “take this away, get rid of it, give it to charity, I don’t care,” you instructed, as you separately held out the dress and the bag.

You prided yourself in reading people well, and in that moment, as she reached for the article of clothing you were handing her, her dark eyes were whirlpools of chaos. She looked a mixture of livid and severe disenchantment.

It was so intense that to a certain extent, it mystified you. She looked so…sad, so utterly devastated.

...
unpleasantly, if not worse, as if not to be outdone.

One of your Korean idol groups had been met with a small traffic accident, fracturing the main vocalist’s knee, and inflicting minor injuries to the rest of the members and their manager on their way to the airport for their heavily invested world tour. The phone call informing you of the incident had been followed by another notifying you that another one of your idols were attacked at LAX by some overzealous fan that was denied access to the idol’s van. Someone had also taken the liberty of botching the paperwork, either in your company or in the broadcasting station and listed a third idol group of yours that was preparing to comeback in three weeks to start promoting next week, and so the production, styling and every other department in your company was forced to run around like chickens with their heads cut off in a desperate scramble to meet an unintended deadline, this including yourself.

All this and it was barely noon. Your mood could hardly be considered tolerable, or so you had thought, until you were standing in the presence of your husband, who in comparison made you look exuberant.

Seto looked you over as you entered his office, eyes drifting down from your matching, thick strapped denim crop top and high- waist denim mini skirt, to your white platform sandals, which matched the white lace detailing on your skirt; his eyes narrowing.

"Could you dress more appropriately when you come into my company?" He spat as you approached his desk. "My board members are never going to take you seriously when you're dressing like you walked out of some girl group."

"I brought you lunch," asshole, you retorted, a distinct sharpness in your tone directed at his comment, dropping the parcel on his desk from a distance, "I'm coming from a variety show that required me to be on screen with a girl group, older than me actually and I'm on my way to host a music show that will require me to dress similarly and I still found time to bring you – my dear husband lunch. What I'm dressed like shouldn't concern you because whether you like it doesn't concern me."

That last part was a lie.

"It concerns me because it’s unbecoming of my wife. You should represent me and my brand better," he snarled.

You scoffed.

“I’m perfectly on brand Seto, my brand. I’m representing my brand, which is what I pay myself to do. Also, news flash, this is what twenty-one year olds dress like – it’s twenty five fucking degrees outside, and the fact that I’m married to the most powerful man in the country shouldn’t change that –”

“What you’re wearing is overly sexualized. You should learn to dress more conservatively when you come here –”

“So like your director’s wives? Their wives are in their fifties, my god! Your wife is twenty-one Seto, so no. Have you seen some of the other things I wear? You knew exactly how I dressed before you married me, this is so random what the fuck?” you shouted, feeling completely ambushed.

Those words seemed to free him of whatever conservative spirit had possessed him.
"I never said - that I personally didn't like it," he began, “you look good. I dealt with more than a handful of morons this morning.”

“So that was your stress talking?” you interrupted. “What would you like me to do about it?” you questioned uncaringly, continuing on with an eyebrow raised, “would you like me to get on my knees and give you head again?”

Your sarcasm was painfully obvious, so clearly he had chosen to ignore it.

“If you’re not averse to it.”

“You’re insufferable,” you snapped, almost turning to walk away before remembering the other reason for your visit.

You tossed the crystal embellished USB on to his desk.

“Here’s what I promised you last night,” you explained while maintaining a hostile tone, “Harada’s your rat as I’m sure you already know. Everybody else is on there also.”

“This is the evidence?” he inquired as he appraised the small device, having picked it up.

“It is.”

You didn’t think you would be able to tolerate any more conversation with the man without having a meltdown, so with that clipped response as your parting remark, you briskly strode out of his office.

…

Early seven in the evening found you walking up the front steps of the mansion, having been dropped off by your driver instead of in an elevator at Kaiba Corp. as you knew you were expected.

The quarrel earlier, in combination with his conscious disregard for your own stress required you, you told yourself, to spend time away from him to preserve your mental sanity.

Stepping past the doorway, your attention immediately funnelled towards the two maids changing the flower arrangement which greeted guests at the front entrance.

The oddness of the hour they had chosen to undertake such a task annoyed you though those sentiments were secondary to the repulsion you felt at the sheer atrocity that was the mirror mosaic vase that had replaced the classic French, gold, and white porcelain one.

The arrangement of red roses that was currently residing in the place where the assorted peonies usually sat was also giving you a headache, though the strong reaction was possibly a result of the catastrophic day you’ve had.

“Did we change the florist?” you questioned the maid that was left behind as the second maid had now disappeared into the winding corridor. As she turned to face you, you recognized her to be the nameless maid from that morning and your displeasure intensified. She just had a face which you had immediately grown to dislike. She was pretty, very pretty in fact, and had she been more cordial, given her young age, perhaps you would have considered training her as an actress. Alas, she had shot herself in the foot.

She wouldn’t respond.
“You work very long hours don’t you?” you noted to the side, mostly to yourself. She continued to be taciturn. “Did I stutter?” you snapped, infuriated by her insubordination. “I asked you two questions.”

“I don’t mind the long hours,” she began to explain, though the defiant tone she hardly attempted to keep at bay was grating your nerves, “I actually enjoy it very much. The florist was not changed.”

“Well it’s hideous.”

“What is?”

“The vase, the flowers, your attitude. I want them all changed. The flowers and the vase I expect returned to their usual.”

“Does master Kaiba agree with this –” she began to ask.

“I don’t care what master Kaiba thinks, though I’m sure he would share my sentiments in calling those ugly. This is my house as well as his and I want those gone. Understood?”

“I will consult with the head maid of the house for her opinion –”

“Why? Does she possess a higher authority than the lady of the house?” you demanded to know.

She opened her mouth – likely to voice her perplexity that was evident on her face when you reached for the vase, and holding her gaze with an eyebrow raised and a challenging smirk, dropped the vessel by her feet, effectively shattering it and drenching the front hall with water, red rose petals and dismembered stalks.

Her confusion transformed into horror and what you assumed was fear as you ordered her to clean up the sea of glass you both were currently standing on. This expression was reflected by the second maid who had emerged from the adjacent corridor with a pair of trimming shears and the few other maid servants who had come running at the sound of the glass vase meeting its end against the marble floor, which you were sure had reverberated through every wing of the mansion.

“Try me like that again, I dare you,” you addressed the first maid, stepping closer to her, before diverting your chillingly placid gaze towards the audience of other staff. “Because then, it won’t be an inanimate object.”

Gazes which conveyed unconcealed distress was shared amongst the group as you walked past them.

Ascending the stairs, you found yourself asking yourself if your conduct had been unnecessarily harsh.

…”

A boring ache against your lower back roused you from where you had passed out on the bed. The time which flashed above the countless missed calls from your husband read half ten, meaning you had been sleeping for over two hours – which was the intended effect of you coming back to the mansion.

Heaving your throbbing body off of the bed, the dull, but very present cramps robbing you of the bliss of your well rested state, you navigated your way through the dim lit room into the bathroom, believing a hot bath would drown out the discomfort.
Going through the routine of removing your makeup and brushing out the knots in your hair felt tedious.

Finally, pouring yourself a full glass of wine, and allowing your cobalt dress to slip to the floor by the tub, you submerged yourself in the borderline scalding hot water.

Taking a generous sip of the red wine before setting it back on the wooden caddy, you were about to slip under the water again when you thought you heard footsteps in the bedroom.

You had been in the bathtub for quite a while now, and couldn’t be sure if your husband had come home. There was no reason for him to be home tonight.

“Seto?” you called out uncertainly, not entirely convinced if you had even heard something.

You were greeted with silence and so after listening keenly for a few more moments, you dismissed what you believed you had heard and slipped back under the water.

Being submerged welcomed you with a deafening silence, drowning out everything beyond it, so you couldn’t place it on anything but instinct when your eyes snapped open to see a figure standing over the water.

It wasn’t Seto; that much you were certain of.

Panicking, you pushed off your toes, only to be held under.

Your captor wasn’t as strong as you had anticipated them to be, though your air deprived state with the sudden movement plunging a flood of water down your nostrils was severely disorienting you.

Each of your desperate bids to allow even an ounce of oxygen into your burning lungs was met time and time again by a pair of small hands forcing you under. You were choking, suffocating on a string of watery coughs, but in the chaos, you managed to wrap your fingers around the stem of your wine glass, before blindly bringing it against where you assumed your attacker’s head might have been.

The water dyed red from the wine that poured over.

You didn’t hear the glass shatter as your ears fell deaf again under the water, though there was a momentary hesitation by the attacker - a weakness in their grip – almost as if something had caused them to falter.

This was when you should have retaliated, but there was a burning in your lungs, a burning in your head, an overwhelming weakness in your limbs that was debilitating, and all you could seem to focus on was a translucent film above your eyes which you were certain was slipping further and further away. The light refracted from that surface above you, the light golden glow scattering through the diluted red. It reminded you of a sunset, a beautiful, silent, sunset.
Would You Do It All Over?

Chapter Notes

This chapter was just basically a detailed dinner. It really explores the specifics of the relationship both from an outside perspective as well as how far it's progressed. How the maid will be dealt with will be explained better in the coming chapters. This is actually half - 5708 words - of the original chapter which exceeded 11,000 words. I hope where it ended could be understood. I didn't want to end two chapters on the same note, that is, I didn't want this one ending the exact same way the last one did because had I included the remaining, it would have.

Side note, I'm trying not to rush the ending but I feel like I did rush the plot forward just a bit, so apologies in advance for that - at least, the tone feels rushed here, or maybe it was just me.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You woke up feeling nauseated with the distinct sensation of something having clawed at the inside of your throat. The putrid flavour of acid having burnt through your throat – the aftertaste which follows vomiting was ever present.

Your limbs were experiencing a weakness, and also lightness, a mismatched combination of feeling wrung through a dryer and feather light.

Turning your half opened eyes to your side, you saw Seto sitting by your bedside; leaned over on his elbows, holding your hand against his forehead, fingers laced through yours.

A sudden flash of bathwater reddened by wine, Seto sitting over you pushing on your chest, a heart wrenching expression on his face materialized in your memory. You vaguely recalled coughing up water, and more distinctly the contents of your stomach, and the accompanying taste which managed to worsen your nausea just at the memory. Resuscitation was never as glamorous as it was romanticized to be in the movies. There was an acute soreness pulsating across your ribs where Seto had pushed down on.

His shirt was now dyed a fading red, almost as if painted by watercolours. He was still wearing his navy suit from that morning, you noticed. His eyes were closed but you could tell he was awake.

“Seto,” you softly called his name.

His head snapped up at your voice, he lowered your hand.

“Are you alright? Are you in pain anywhere?”

“I’m fine, don’t worry.”

“I don’t need your false assurance; I’m asking you if you’re hurt somewhere that I’ve missed.”

You weren’t sure how else to answer his question, so you simply shook your head. That seemed to
appease him.

“A maid tried to drown you,” he explained as if reading your expression.

That much you had figured.

“How are you here?” you rasped.

“I came looking for you when you didn’t answer your phone calls. This is exactly why I asked you to come straight back to me from work. Do you know how worried I was?” he bellowed, his voice which still carried an agitated edge bounding off the walls of the large room. “If I had come home a moment too late – ” he faltered, seemingly unable to complete that sentence, unable to bring himself to voice out loud the possibility.

“Where is she?” you questioned, infuriation filling and overflowing you.

“She’s being detained in the servant’s quarters by security until police arrives.”

That was all you needed to be told before you tore the covers off of yourself, which – the motion – wasn’t as fluid or effective as you had intended for it to be given your weakened state. Swinging your legs off of the bed, Seto reached an arm over, restraining you.

“Where do you think you’re going?”

“If that tramp thinks she’s going to attempt to kill me and live to tell about it –”

“You’re not going anywhere,” he disagreed. Apparently his earlier question had been rhetorical.

“I wasn’t asking for permission Seto,” you bit back, and the resolve in his eye faded, as he removed his arm from you.

Your hair hanging damply over your shoulders, you stormed out barefoot in your bathrobe, not sparing any thoughts for appearances.

You weren’t entirely familiar with all the corridors and rooms of the mansion but you had a rough sense for where the maid’s quarters were.

Bursting through the doors of the room, security parted, seemingly startled by your entrance, clearing you the path up to the handcuffed maid.

“Give me the keys to her handcuffs,” you demanded from security and they hesitantly complied, clearly confused. You would at least allow her the liberty of defending herself. Allowing the metal restraints to drop with a clank to the floor, you took a step back before swinging your hand in the air, then allowing it to fall against the side of her face, sharply snapping it to the side.

A redness began to gather on her cheek where your palm had made impact, and in your state of delirium, you raised your arm again as she turned her head slowly to look up at you.

You felt a strong grip encircle your arm suspended in mid-air.

“That’s enough,” you heard Seto’s voice boom from behind you. You turned around furiously to face your husband, your eyes reading betrayal, only to be faced with a matched intensity in his.

“I knew you liked me,” you heard cried out from behind you, immediately earning both your and Seto’s attention as the two of you snapped around to face the source of the voice. You allowed your arm to slowly drop to your side, Seto’s hand continuing to grip you. The maid lurched
forward, arms outstretched, falling against Seto. “I knew when you didn’t yell at me the way you did the others that we had something. It’s alright that you didn’t know my name; you’ve never had the chance to ask -”

You simply watched in utter bewilderment the freak show that was unfolding before you.

“Once was well deserved.” Seto cut off her misguided confession, roughly pushing her off of him as he spoke to you, “once because she’s already injured.”

It was then that you noticed the bandage wrapped around her forehead under her fringe. Your wine glass had clearly made impact.

“Everything was good. I don’t understand why – it was all good till you brought her home,” she started again.

For reasons beyond you, you suddenly felt very sorry for her. Unrequited love, as briefly as you had experienced it – or thought you had – was, for a lack of a more descriptive term a total and unforgiving bitch.

“Look kid,” Seto interrupted her rant once more, “I have no idea what your name is because I don’t care. It’s no wonder I haven’t yelled at you, I don’t even recall seeing you. You should be counting your blessings that I didn’t beat you to an inch of your life when I found you drowning my wife!”

“I’m not a kid! I’m the same age as her! And that’s not true,” she disputed distraught. “I’ve spoken to you many times.”

“I couldn’t tell you apart from every other maid that works here if my life depended on it –”

“My dear,” you suddenly interrupted your husband, much to his surprise, “I understand you love him, but wasn’t drowning me a bit much? What you are is delusional and what you have for him is obsession. Whatever feelings you have is one sided unfortunately, and I know it’s difficult to believe when you love someone so mu-”

“Shut up! Shut up!” she screeched, “Stop pretending to be so nice, it’s sickening. I don’t know how you fool all my friends but I know what you’re like, you’ve seduced him, I hear what you do with him, you’re not sweet or pure – it’s no wonder they want you dead!”

Your eyes widened and at the realization of what she had said, so did hers.

“What did you say?”

“What are you talking about?” Seto pushed past you, a sense of urgency in his tone as he apprehended the maid by her shoulders. “Who’s they?” he demanded to know with narrowed eyes, shaking her slightly.

The look he was giving her, even you would have easily cracked under.

“I’m sorry,” she suddenly broke into sobs, “I’ve been working here since I was eighteen – for three years I worked for you, and out of nowhere she - I was so angry - when you brought her home and –and they wanted her gone too,” she started saying disjointedly.

She went on to explain how someone – she wasn’t sure who exactly though she identified him by name – had reached out to her and paid her to listen in on the happenings of the mansion and report back to him.
Seto went on to question everything, wringing her of every last piece of information he possibly could from her, which in the end didn’t amount to much since she was just an expendable pawn in the grand scheme.

She was soon handed off to the police and you found yourself back in your bedroom with your husband.

He was silent. Sitting by your bedside again, chin against his folded hands, elbows anchored next to your thighs on the bed; he had been silent since you two entered the room over an hour ago.

It was beginning to be unnerving, especially the murderous look in his eye.

“Seto, you’re starting to scare me,” you admitted, shaking him by his shoulder lightly.

His blue eyes flicked up to meet yours.

“I wish I had scared you sooner, and maybe this circus could have been avoided had you listened. I say things with a lot of foresight, and I expect you to listen.”

“The mansion was so well guarded –”

“You should listen,” he continued, apparently his short pause had not been an indication that he was finished, “so I don’t have to lose my bloody mind every time I lose sight of you, or so I don’t walk into find you drowned in the bathtub in what I at first thought was your own blood! Do you realize how much you worry me? I feel like I’m raising a child all over again!”

“I’m sorry.”

“You infuriate me!” he roared. “What would I have done if I lost you like that?”

“Seto I’m really sorry,” you repeated, voice producing itself smaller this time. “I’m fine, don’t get so worked up, don’t do that to yourself -“

“How are you so thoughtless? Do you not realize what you mean to me?” his voice literally thundered.

You were startled into silence. Nonplussed didn’t begin to describe your current state.

What you meant to him?

As a matter of fact, you never had. You were just…his wife. You knew he held you with some affection but you’ve never allowed yourself to ponder beyond that, perhaps you had been afraid of what you’d discover – or rather what you wouldn’t. You knew he had a strong sense of obligation towards you but that was hardly something to inspire emotions as strong as what he had just displayed.

“You wouldn’t tell me,” you slowly reminded him as you recovered.

“I gave you the Kaiba name, and I share my entire life with you.”

“Your logic is flawed; you didn’t marry me out of love.”

“Not at first, no,” he admitted in a low voice that met with every surface it fell against with friction, “but with the exception of Mokuba, I wouldn’t have found myself wishing for it to me instead
when I found you that way had it been anyone else.”

That spoke volumes.

“Wait, what?”

“I have no intention of repeating myself,” he declared firmly, continuing on roughly, “I regard your life as if it were my own, so if you have a shred of genuine consideration for me, don’t be so damn careless, because going forward, how you treat your own life I will see as indication of how you view mine.”

Oh dear god, he was serious.

“I must have saved a country in my past life,” you finally said after a few moments’ pause.

“What?”

“I have no intention of repeating myself,” you imitated with a suppressed smile.

A ghost of a smile found its way on to his lips after a few moments spent in consideration of what you had said.

“Are you going back to work?” you asked him after allowing a few more moments to be spent in silence.

“I’ll work from in here.” You could hear the discontent in his voice.

“You don’t have to do that.”

You knew exactly how stressful a project launch could be and especially how much of a burden was placed on the CEO to ensure it was successful. There were so many sensitive, moving parts that required attention, diligence and much more time than your husband was giving himself. Not that he would ever allow it, but you would hate to see Kaiba Corp. launching a game at anything below its full potential, even if you were technically leading the rivaling corporation.

“I don’t have much choice with you like this.”

“I have a better idea, let’s go out to eat,” you suggested, “We can head back to Kaiba Corp. after for you to work. I don’t want to be in here tonight.”

“It’s almost midnight, and you hate dining out,” he flatly noted.

“I think all this time I hated who I was forced dine out with rather than the concept of it. The paparazzi doesn’t have a bedtime at midnight last I recalled and I’m feeling vengeful. I don’t want to give anyone the satisfaction of being hauled up in here.”

That earned you a smirk, pride possibly hiding behind it.

“Are you feeling up to it?” he questioned, concern contrasting his expression.

“I feel like a cat clawed at my insides if you really want to know and I’m pretty sure you caused one of my ribs to puncture my lung, but that’s nothing some good wine can’t cure.”

“You shouldn’t be drinking with your reflux.”

“Says the man who downed half a bottle of whiskey in one go.”
“I don’t have reflux,” he countered.

“Whatever Seto, you can’t tell me what to do.”

“We’ll see about that.”

“We will,” you agreed defiantly, as you reluctantly allowed him to help you off the bed and into the closet.

…”

“There’s no way we’re going there,” you called out from the closet to your husband as you slipped on a rose gold silk slip dress, disputing his choice of restaurant, careful not to smear your make on the neckline.

He had just suggested a posh French restaurant, one you were well acquainted with, in one of the most affluent parts of Domino, renowned for being frequented by wealthy, high profile individuals. His reasoning had been that the establishment was familiar to the both of you, close by and open until the early hours of the morning.

“Why not?” he questioned displeased.

“Because it’s too pretentious and restricting. I also don’t plan on wearing more diamonds than my body weight tonight, and you as well as I know that’s the only way I’ll steer clear of the rich old ladies turning their noses up at me,” you explained from experience, sweeping your hair which fell in waves out of the dress.

He smothered a laugh at that commentary. Then his eyes travelled from the neckline to the hem of your dress.

“You don’t like the dress?” you inquired, feigning innocence at the obvious.

“That could hardly be called a dress. You’re not wearing that.”

What was currently earning his disproval was the unforgivingly deep neckline which hung from the needle thin straps and the eyebrow raising hem length, though it really wasn’t indecent by any stretch - by your standards at least.

“I’m wearing it,” you dismissed him simply, as you held out your black ribbon choker for him to clasp around your neck. “I’m wearing a pair of shorts underneath, but you don’t see it do you? Which means it’s covering enough,” you argued as he fumbled with the small metal hook.

“I will not have my wife showing that much leg,” he disagreed.

“This will get the paparazzi’s attention. Besides, I’ve loved this dress since I saw it on the runway.”

“You could step out in a paper bag and it’ll get their attention,” he noted as he stepped away, having clasped your necklace.

“True, but I’d rather not make the front page in a paper bag. You’ll only drive yourself mad trying to get me to change, let it go,” you spoke as you turned to face him. You knew he was also well aware that you couldn’t be convinced out of your convictions, even by him. “Now, I say Monte
Monte Carlo was perhaps just as lavish, much more lively, and notorious for being frequented by businessmen – especially married businessmen - with their countless escorts, though it wasn’t exclusive to such patrons and was also loved by many celebrities. As upscale as the place was, its carefree ambience made it much less formal. It had a fairly large dining room, lounge sans the nerve grating live music, full bar as well as an adjoining casino.

You knew Seto loved to hate that place though he was often forced to frequent the establishment as his business partners were particularly fond of it. Your husband was infamous for being possibly the only businessman to visit the place alone – that is to say, without a date. This in itself – that is, him going with his ‘fiancée’ would be a conversation in the papers tomorrow. That, along with the fact that the place and everything it stood for clashed strikingly with everything you were known for. It was basically the antithesis of your image.

The place though wasn’t obscene or raunchy, in fact it was classy, and maintained a polished image as one of the best fine dining establishments in the city. It was just very reminiscent of the nightlife of the city it was named after.

“Have you ever been to the place?” he asked you unamused by the suggestion, tone sounding almost protective.

“No.”

“With your image, people will talk.”

“I’m going with my big, bad fiancé, what are they going to say?” you challenged.

“It’s like a good woman gone wrong, that place,” he commented, expression souring.

You couldn’t help but chuckle at how accurate that analogy was.

“Seto,” you sighed, “this place is a lot more private, the lighting is dim, it’s less stiff and I’ll actually get to sit next to you if you loosen up enough to sit in the lounge.”

He looked down at you with a steady gaze that was quite unsettling for a few seconds, and for a moment you thought he was going to refuse, especially as his eyes narrowed.

“Is that what you want?”

“Yes?” The way he posed the question was so disconcerting that it made you question your own request.

“Fine.”

…

“Must you insist on wearing that?” Seto asked in irritation for what was probably the fifteenth time as he was driving to the restaurant.

His hand gripper your bare thigh a little tighter at your answer, obviously displeased.

“I told you, I’m wearing shorts underneath.”
Stepping out to the blinding flashes of the paparazzi, Seto materialized by your door faster than the valet, tossing his keys to the young man as he did. He must have allowed for a handful of photos to capture you in the dress before he draped the black suit jacket of the suit he had changed into over your shoulders, glaring menacingly as he always did at the paparazzi, guiding you forward by both your shoulders. If he pulled you any closer as he walked up the entrance, in his own words, you would be inside his shirt.

It was fortunate that his suit jacket complemented your black snake-skinned, heeled, ankle boots.

You could feel the temperature drop noticeably as you stepped inside to meet the reception.

The interior of the restaurant was as you expected; fairly quiet, with the exception of the distant clinking of the glasses from the dining room, the dull, almost faded buzz of blended voices from the faraway casino and the muted chatter, dimly lit, and decorated monochromatically in shades of dark coffee and white. The dining area you passed had white cloth draped tables, a combination of dark wooded chairs and grey cushioned chaises for seating, all candle lit with gold glowing chandeliers constructed of series of small, upturned lampshades attached to wrought iron structures. White curtains fell from the high ceilings, adding another level of secrecy to the already obscurely lit space.

The large wooden latticed, glass partitions adorned with the curtains continued to the lounge, where both the décor and the ambience assumed a different vibe. It felt more intimate with its red velvet tufted booths curving around dark cherry wooded tables, all circling the oval shaped bar lit by lamps pouring white light into the center of the room. The lounge area was darker, only visibly lit by the aforementioned lights, with the small gold speckles that glowed from the ceiling hardly lifting the darkness of the space. The hardwood gave way to lush red carpet, lining all the floors, only ending where the booths were raised by steps up from the main floor.

As the two of you were guided into the lounge, you came face to face – quite unfortunately – with an elderly gentleman who was apparently acquainted with your husband, and a young woman bound to him by the hip that was easily your age.

The experience was already promising to be quite awkward, you could tell.

After the pleasantries were exchanged, quite grudgingly on your husband’s part, the older man’s attention turned to you.

“And who might this young lady be Mr. Kaiba?” he inquired, looking you over with a gaze that was quite unsettling. Your eyebrow hitched upwards slightly, though not at the man failing to recognize you – he was beyond your demographic.

“My fiancée, heiress to the Kodama empire and president of SKO entertainment,” Seto introduced you by name, a tinge of pride to his voice, as his eyes grazed over the form of the woman on his partner’s arm, a disdainful smirk finding him.

“Oh yes, pardon me for not recognizing you earlier, I expected the CEO of Kodama to look older. I seem to have misread the situation, my apologies.”

He totally thought you were an escort and had the nerve to admit it, how lovely.

“And who might this lovely lady be,” you asked sweetly, repeating his question, mostly out of spite, while pointedly directing your gaze towards the wedding band restricting his ring finger.

He stuttered trying to find an appropriate answer, before introducing her as a friend and quickly...
scrambling to excuse himself and his ‘friend.’ As you watched the young woman shrinking visibly before the two of you, you sincerely felt guilty for having placed her in that position.

Following that uncomfortable encounter, at least on the part of the older gentleman, you two were seated on the booth to the right of the bar, though really the bar curved behind the crescent shaped booth which was oddly wedged into the bar, as three other booths were – spaced equally around the oval structure.

The hostess disappeared handing you the menu for alcohols, advising that your server would be with you momentarily.

“Isn’t this nice?” you asked leaning into Seto’s arm as he sat at the center of the booth wearing his signature scowl. “You look unhappy,” you remarked at his silence, slightly disappointed.

“I shouldn’t have brought you here.”

“Why not? This is like the first date we’ve ever had since we met, and that’s saying something considering we’ve been married for like four and a half months now; the first proper one anyway. I mean, what did we even do for our hundred day anniversary?”

“We slept together,” he remarked dryly, only half serious. “And that’s precisely why. It’s pathetic what some of these married men do here with wives at home.”

“That’s what’s bothering you? The infidelity?” you questioned, slightly tittering. It was obvious this type of behaviour – adultery - he regarded a serious offence, perhaps even more so than you did. It also wasn’t the first time you’ve noticed this. He had reacted quite strongly at the mere implication of you being unfaithful to him.

“It’s disgusting,” he spat, “It’s hardly appropriate for you to be around. It’s nothing to laugh about,” he berated you.

“Seto, I wasn’t born yesterday, I know what goes on at most of these restaurants,” you assured, reaching for the leather bound menu.

While surely this restaurant saw a lot more action, all of these upscale restaurants on this side of Domino regularly entertained businessmen and their collection of escorts. Signing many business deals, you’ve been subjected to uncomfortably sit across the table from businessmen who had in ill-taste arrived accompanied by two sometimes three escorts – especially in scenarios where they weren’t expecting their business partner to be a young woman.

He only offered an ‘hmph’ in response.

Tracing your index finger along the list of wines the restaurant had to offer, you bit your lip in thought.

When the waitress arrived, introducing herself nervously to the both of you - though it was obvious who the source of her agitation was – you ordered the wine you wanted, only to be corrected by Seto suggesting a different one.

“I don’t like that, it’s not sweet enough,” you disagreed.

“It’s not for you,” he noted flatly, “you won’t be drinking, and you know why.”

“And you’re supposed to drive,” you contested.
“You can drive.”

“How are you supposed to work?” you challenged.

“There’s hardly enough alcohol in this for it to do anything for me.”

‘Then by that logic, why can’t you drive,’ you mused to yourself, before deciding to bite your tongue on the thought in case he did really take you up on the offer.

By that logic, it should have been fine for you to drink too.

“Fine,” you sighed in defeat, “I’ll go for a Pepsi.”

“She’ll have an iced tea,” he disagreed, closing the menu sharply, handing it back to the waitress.

“Seto!” you called accusingly.

“I think you’ve done enough damage for yourself not listening to me, for one night,” he reminded you harshly in the waitress’s absence. “Until –” he faltered sighing in what sounded to be exhaustion, “- at least until the game launch is over, just do as I say and try not to hurt yourself.”

You couldn’t help but concede at the tone he had used on you just then. It was strict and yet it managed to maintain a degree of gentleness.

“I’m sorry; I’ve really gotten in your way, at a time I should be helping,” you said apologetically, allowing his words to sink in. “I should have done better as your wife.”

You softly wrapped your hand around his wrist. His hand snapped up, reaching for your wrist as your hand was unclasped from his.

“I don’t think you give yourself enough credit,” he contradicted. “I don’t imagine many women would find me very tolerable the way you do in marriage, especially not any twenty-one year old.”

“I can’t think of one woman in this country who wouldn’t jump at the chance to replace me.”

“I’m sure many things appear desirable externally. Infatuation is easy. Marriage is a different beast entirely. It certainly wasn’t what I expected it to be, and I didn’t exactly allow you a chance to consider much before marrying me. This is your youth; you have the right to be selfish in your decisions sometimes.”

“Thank you, for being so understanding,” you smiled, leaning against him, laying your head against his shoulder.

“You could stand to be less formal about it.”

He wrapped his left arm around your waist, pulling you closer. There was something about his gesture that made your heart flutter.

“Would you do it all over again though? Would you have signed that contract to marry me if you knew exactly what -” you began to ask apprehensively.

The timing was not in your favour as you were interrupted by a couple appearing to be around Seto’s age approaching the booth.

The man was clad in a surprisingly tasteful, dark green leather jacket and black pants. His dark hair was swept upwards. On his arm was a dark haired woman, in a contrastingly distasteful black tube
dress which was better defined as a belt. You wouldn’t deny though that she was quite attractive.

You reflexively pulled away, quite clumsily, apparently catching your husband off guard at your sudden movement.

“Hiraoka,” Seto addressed the man with obvious displeasure, as he regained his momentarily shaken composure, seemingly recognizing the man.

“Woah – Hot damn,” the man whistled as he appraised you from head to toe. “Holy shit Kaiba, who’s the fucking bombshell? The news said you were settling down, not starting this game. Or are you starting it because you’re getting married?”

The man was clearly intoxicated so not recognizing you, you could overlook, but did he just call you a bloody escort?

Oh hell no, that was twice tonight.

“Watch your filthy mouth Hiraoka, you’re on thin ice. Take a closer look, this is my future wife, the president of SKO Entertainment and Kodama Corporation you’re talking to.”

It was obvious that the girl on his arm had recognized you and the petrification growing on her face at the direction of the conversation was noticeable.

“I thought you were marrying the sugar plum fairy not … this,” the man began to say when the girl beside him finally leaned over and from what you could read of her lips, whispered your name in his ear. The way he had referred to you with that last phrase had conveyed an odd sort of admiration and sickeningly, lust, though his expression now was just perplexity as he visibly looked over you again, a certain reverence transforming his face.

Seto seems to have picked up on his tone, and his earlier glare somewhat softened, though the creases along his features continued to convey his repulsion.

“I think you owe my fiancée an apology,” Seto demanded. “She’s cut from a very different clothe than what’s hanging off your arm.”

The man in the dark green jacket stammered an apology to you; though you were convinced his agitation was mainly derived from the thinly concealed menace in Seto’s tone. You were also certain that had he been in a more sober state, this conversation would have transpired very differently, though perhaps he would wake up tomorrow to regret losing two potential business partners in a drunken stupor.

“This is why I asked you not to wear that dress,” he hissed as the couple took their leave.

“I’m grateful he didn’t mistake me for the grim reaper cloaked in this suit jacket of yours,” you contested, “god knows he was drunk enough to.”

“He could see enough.”

“What part are you mad about, the bombshell comment or the sugar plum fairy one? …Because they were both equally insulting, though for drastically different reasons, one for dressing exactly the opposite of this. I don’t think it would have mattered what I wore,” you disagreed as Seto’s glass of wine was placed in front of him by the waitress, along with your iced tea. “He would still have undressed me with his eyes,” you shuddered.

Seto watched you intently while sipping his wine.

“Come here,” he finally barked, setting his glass down with one hand, his left wrapping around
your waist again, pulling you against him.

He placed the menu in front of the both of you and you quite victoriously received that as him relenting.

Ordering dinner was an affair similar to how ordering wine had transpired; that is, Seto basically disagreeing with all the choices you made for yourself. Apparently salad wasn’t a real entrée, French onion soup was too oily and you couldn’t have ahi tuna tartare he had said, because of the vinaigrette’s acidity. The only thing you seemed to agree on that night was your mutual dislike – or rather strong abhorrence – of foie gras.

As the waitress walked away with your orders, Seto fell back into his earlier, stern and silent state.

“Are you still upset by what happened?” you probed, leaning forward, peering at his sullen expression. “The way I see it,” you continued, reaching for his wine glass. His blue eyes followed your fingers as they wrapped around the stem, up to the dark red liquid as you lightly swirled it in the glass against the table, and up to your lips with the glass as you lifted it, before meeting your eyes with an unambiguous gaze of disapproval, though he refrained from commenting. “Oh, that’s bitter,” you noted, face scrunching as you bit your lip at the tart aftertaste. “The way I see it,” you began again, setting the glass down and lifting your hand up to grip his shirt, leaning in, “he can look but he can’t touch, not the way you can.”

“If you’re insinuating that I’m jealous, I’m not,” he declared firmly, eyes sharply holding yours from slightly above.

“Call it what you want,” you spoke flippantly, pulling yourself up closer to him, lips brushing his. Your other hand travelled up his thigh suggestively.

“Save it for the bedroom,” he advised roughly, “this is not the right place for it,” though he made no motion to move away, stiffly remaining in place.

With the exception of two patrons sitting at the far end of the room at the bar, occupying the bartender’s attention and services, the lounge given the time of night – or rather the morning – was empty.

“I don’t care,” you whispered, closing the space between you and him as you pressed your lips up against his. He surprisingly did not object, instead responding to the kiss; tightening the hand he had wrapped around you, pulling you closer. Similarly, your hand against his shirt also tightened. “We should eat out more often,” you spoke breathlessly as you pulled away.

“You’ve definitely grown,” he responded with a smirk, tone bordering taunting.

The rest of the dinner passed in a similar fashion, with you struggling to keep your hands off of him, which you discovered was exceedingly difficult when one’s husband was as attractive as yours was – though this still an understatement - and while he seemed to manage, you could tell he was severely restraining himself also.

You both agreed to pass on dessert as it was getting very late and Seto needed to get back to work.

“I know you wanted dessert,” he commented, after sending his card away with the waitress.

“Not really,” you lied, “it’s just extra calories anyway.”

“Next time,” he added stoically, clearly seeing through your lie.
Chapter End Notes

Just to clarify, it wasn't the reader's dress that was causing all the confusion - Seto's jacket was covering everything - rather, it was all the circumstances surrounding her appearance there and what she usually presented herself to be. Though that being said, the irritation Seto felt throughout the experience, what was not voiced here may cause a storm later on.
You were roused by movement next to you. Your tired eyes opened to your husband, leaning against the headboard to your left, already pouring over his tablet.

Noticing that he had changed into his black shirt and black pants, as you rolled over to nestle against his side, you wondered if he had gotten any sleep.

“What time is it?”

“Five thirty.”

“Did you get any sleep?” He only offered a hum in response. “When did you come to bed?”

“Around four.”

“And you’re already up.” It was more a statement than a question, though the concern in your tone was evident.

Not receiving any attention, you pulled yourself up against him, leaning your head against the crook of his shoulder. He distractedly freed his arm from under you, draping it over your back, as he continued to read whatever was currently occupying his screen.

“This is why I said yesterday was a bad idea,” he spoke roughly, motioning towards his tablet.

Still disoriented by only having just woken up, eyes still struggling to focus your doubling vision, you took a moment as your vision adjusted before wearily glossing over the article.

“What’s the big deal? It’s just one article. They always get worked up when I wear something that doesn’t fit their paradigm and usually forget about it the next time I wear a white dress.”

“There’s hundreds more like this,” he corrected. “They think I’m a bad influence for taking you here and think I’m the reason for you dressing like this. They think I’m making a good girl go bad,” he growled.

“You said what the media said of us doesn’t bother you?” You were perplexed by his overt concern for the articles.

“It comes at a sensitive time for my company.”

“What do they even say? Lucifer corrupted their fairy?” you laughed lightly, remembering the articles they had written of you at the dating rumours months ago.

“Actually yes,” he said through gritted teeth.
“I’m sorry,” you conceded, huddling closer to him, “I’ll take care of it later. I just really wanted to go there…with you.”

“There’s a reason I tell you things and I expect you to listen, I say them because I possess more foresight than you. Stop dressing this way and go back to the way you used to. It was more becoming.”

“You want me to dress like the sugar plum fairy?” you mocked, not entirely grasping the seriousness of his tone.

“If it keeps you out of the papers.”

“You want me to perpetuate the façade the media has carved out for me?” you questioned accusingly, comprehending his tone. “That’s an act Seto; you should know that by now. It’s so pure it makes me cringe sometimes.”

It was probably obvious by now that you were fairly repulsed by your own image. There was an unsettling undertone of sexual perversion in the implication of untainted innocence. As if it was poised on a pedestal to be worshipped, with the fascination of the concept lying in the titillating invitation of asking to be deflowered.

It didn’t matter Seto already had, because the public was blissfully unaware.

Quite frankly, you weren’t here for that patriarchy but every attempt at differing from it was met with backlash such as this.

You weren’t sure how arousing your husband found this concept – if he was even partial to it – but it wasn’t a dynamic you were comfortable consciously acting on in reality beyond a few occasions in the bedroom if he really wanted you to.

“It was more tolerable than what you’re doing now,” he husked.

You scoffed, continuing on derisively, “men are so typical. Even you. All of you want some sweet angel that caters to all their sexual fantasies when no one is looking. None of you care for substance.”

“Watch what you say!” he barked, “I’ve never viewed you as an object solely existing for my pleasure if that’s what you’re suggesting. Stay low until the game launch because my company can’t handle the bad press right now and I can’t take the stress from it. I want you to get a handle on your choice of clothing and how you conduct yourself because I’m occupied as it is babysitting you from everything else.”

It was clear to you now that this was an ill combination of sleep deprivation and stress talking as opposed to any concise conviction being conveyed and you just happened to be the most accessible punching bag. You were convinced he didn’t particularly even care how you dressed for the most part, only irritated by the added strain that the media upheaval was having on his own image which normally he wouldn’t even bother batting an eye to.

“I’m always such a disappointment to you aren’t I?” you questioned, trying to tear away from him, on the verge of tears from being scolded first thing in the morning.

“Did I say that?” he growled, tightening his hold.

Seto was clearly becoming increasingly more intolerable as the game launch drew closer, and with the added stress of securing evidence to indict Wakamura, he was one incorrect button push from a
nuclear meltdown. The man’s mood was on the verge of constantly exploding and being the person who spent the most time with him, your near future was looking exceedingly bleak.

“I honestly hate you so much.”

“What?” he demanded to know, peering over to look at you. “You’re being childish with those remarks.”

“I didn’t realise I was going to need to re-carve myself to fit your ideal of a perfect wife. I feel like I’m going to lose my identity under the weight of this corporation. You needed a polished trophy, not a human being.”

“Where is this coming from?”

“I was wondering when you and your company’s image and needs would invade my space. It’s been a long time coming – I saw this coming,” you noted wryly. “So this is what it means to be married to the most powerful man in Japan.”

He wouldn’t respond, though you did feel him exhaling sharply.

“I’m also an actress Seto; I’m good at becoming people I’m not. So if this is what you want, that’s what I’ll become. Though then again, businessmen are pretty great at that too aren’t they?”

“What are you insinuating?” he barked, still holding you.

You weren’t aware what you had said was received as an insinuation, you had meant for it to be an outright declaration:

‘You’re a manipulative bastard.’

“Nothing,” you instead said, lifting your head away from him, turning his face with your fingers to face you. Blue eyes were all but burning. Straddling him, you closed your lips over his for a brief moment before pulling away. “I love you,” you lied, eyes locked on his lips.

“Is that part of your act?” he sharply inquired.

“Why don’t you figure that out?”

Leaving that as homework for him, you sauntered over to the bathroom.

…

Pointedly slamming down a plate of French toast topped with raspberries and peaches on his desk, you looked up to catch his gaze. You observed his eyes move down as he appraised your elbow length sleeved, off-shoulder, pearl blue dress which criss-crossed at the front to form an overlapping ‘x’ before flaring at the waist to end at your knees. His eyes flicked back up from your nude, almond toed heels that were tied into a silk bow at the ankle, as he studied your lightly waved hair cascading over your Dolce and Gabbana baroque earrings and past your shoulders.

“Take care of your health,” you advised, somewhat indifferent, as you placed the mug filled with Earl Grey tea with similar hostility next to the plate.

He muttered a thank you, or so you assumed.

In spite of the altercation earlier that morning, and as trying as his behaviour continued to be, you were willing to tolerate him for the sake of his wellbeing, as well as your own sanity.
You weren’t a particular people pleaser, but you would oblige to his request of dressing more in line with your image and his. You would act the part too, though not with the fairest intentions. It would be interesting to see how long he would hold his tongue from criticizing your behaviour for the sake of honouring his previous words.

“I’m going to work,” you added, before leaning over and kissing his cheek. “Have a good day at work,” you offered smiling.

Turning to walk away from him, you could tell he was clearly disconcerted by the sudden switch. As you reached the middle of his office, the office door opened with a short knock and in walked three board directors, all who you recognized, along with Kaoru.

“Good Morning,” you bowed politely, catching them off guard with your sudden politeness, though they bowed deeper in return.

Shooting a glance over your shoulder at your husband, you left his office.

…

Returning to Seto’s office late that night, you were greeted with an empty office. Without a receptionist to inquire his whereabouts, you set down your bags on his desk, intending to call him. Fumbling with the fingerprint reader on your phone, you hardly heard the elevator in the corner of the room opening.

“I was expecting you earlier,” you heard your husband’s voice behind you.

His complexion was flushed, fringe plastered damply with perspiration, sweat running past his jaw.

“Where were you? Are you alright?” you inquired, mildly concerned by his appearance. Had you paid any attention to his attire that would perhaps have answered your question to a certain degree.

“I was working out.”

“You work out?” you questioned, thoughtlessly surprised. You really shouldn’t have been considering how incredibly impressive his physique was. He wouldn’t have such definition if all he did was sitting in a chair all day.

It was then your eyes drifted down to his grey t-shirt, drenched and clinging to his well-defined abdominal muscles, his black track pants and the towel draped around his neck.

“Obviously,” he responded flatly, undertone screaming that you were an idiot for ever having thought differently.

“I brought dinner,” you quickly added, motioning to the brown bag still attached to your wrist by a glossed drawstring, hoping to distract from your blunder.

He held your gaze blankly for an instant before heading towards the sofa. Following after him, your next words were interrupted by your phone ringing.

“Yeah, it’s me,” you answered, “I won’t be coming, I assume you’re taking the company jet?…I have prior engagements…yes I realize how monumental it is for them to get their seventh win less than a year into debut, you do realise I personally handled that entire album from production to concept don’t you? That was the intended effect…since when do I – I have no obligation to answer
to you…yes…very well…yes…I rather you not…yes…I except every single one of you to be back on time for tomorrow’s board meeting first thing… yes, give them my best,” you spoke sharply, hanging up.

“What was that about?” Seto inquired, sitting down on the sectional sofa.

“My marketing director, one of my rookie Korean groups got their seventh win on a music show on their first ever comeback after debut. A bunch of our company execs are going to a party we are throwing to congratulate the group.”

“And you’re not going why?”

“I thought it would be better if I stayed with you.”

“That’s your reason?” he questioned skeptically, raising an eyebrow.

“Cute boys and alcohol, why else would I not go?”

Your husband was clearly unimpressed by that response. You thought it was pretty clever.

“Are they older than you?”

“For the most part, except the one twenty year old.” He offered another unamused ‘hmph’ in response. “You have nothing to worry about, I like guys much older than me,” you added, “I married you didn’t I?”

“I doubt you knew how old I was when you married me. I would be surprised if you had known anything besides my full name at the time.”

“Please Seto, you’re the country’s most eligible bachelor, I knew how old you were, and everything else every other girl on this side of the world knew about you,” you corrected, as you unpacked the various cartons on to the glass coffee table.

“I seriously doubt that.”

“This is yours,” you placed the chopped steak in front of him, before arranging the other plastic containers in front of the both of you. “Are you going to miss that title?”

“What?”

“Being the most eligible bachelor,” you elaborated, sitting across from him in one of the plush chairs.

“I don’t care for such ridiculous titles.”

“Not that women will stop falling after you, but you must feel at least a little disappointed.”

He looked up at you mildly irritated by your probing, picking up his fork.

“That’s a charade they’ve been dragging me into without my consent since I turned eighteen. I’ve never cared for it. Besides, I gained something I actually care for in exchange, I don’t see the loss here.”

Your eyebrow spiked noticeably at the declaration, unsure of how to accept that, if it even meant what you thought it to.
“Are you – are you saying that you – me?”

“Yes. Come here.”

“What?”

“Come here,” he repeated demandingly, motioning towards the seat next to him on the sofa.

“I’m perfectly comfortable here.”

“That’s not what I’m worried about,” he shot back harshly.

“I’d rather stay here.”

He wanted a conservative wife, that’s what he was getting – at least the best version you could create of your disobedient self.

“If you’re concerned about your dress staining with sweat, don’t. I don’t like repeating myself.”

Standing reluctantly, you moved yourself next to him, not wanting his stern tone to elevate any further. Inadvertently, you stiffened at his touch as he wrapped his left arm around your waist.

“What’s with you?” he barked, sensing the concealed hostility.

“What?” you question, feigning ignorance. He merely shook his head, perhaps unsure of how to go about addressing what was misplaced in your behaviour.

You can’t have your cake and eat it too my dear.

“I had another background test run on all the personnel serving in the manor,” he stoically informed after a while.

“Oh?”

“Everyone else came back clean.”

“That’s a relief,” you admitted, pausing. “The woman that tried to drown me –”

“I will see to it that she never sees the light of day.”

“I suppose there’s not much that can be done to save her is there? Being tried for attempted, premeditated murder with such conclusive evidence?”

“You want her to be saved?” he questioned disbelievingly.

“Not exactly… I just – poor thing, she was misguided. Unrequited love is…difficult. I would know.”

“Who failed to return your affections?” he questioned, his attention suddenly catching your every word. It was almost strange, the undertone of his voice.

“You.”

“What?” his voice snapped harshly, pulling away slightly to look at you.

“You must have noticed that I – ” suddenly dread overcame your thoughts. “You won’t touch her family would you?”
“She was an orphan.”

“Oh. Can her situation be helped?”

“You’re too soft. I will allow no such thing.”

... 

Dinner – at least for you – was an awkward affair. Seto hardly spoke after that, and when he did, it was details of his work, which, given it as all you were surrounded by as of late, was stale on your ear.

The night found you working alongside your husband on your own reports into the early hours of the morning. Hunched over your laptop still in your blue dress, replacing the dinner dishes, paperwork was sprawled across the narrow coffee table.

Finalizing the last report you had intended to for the night, you prepared to go to sleep. Your husband remained a stone statue before his screen, with nothing but the occasional flick of his eyes and his swiftly moving fingers to indicate he was in fact still alive.

Walking past his desk, your eyes caught on a pile of peculiarly coloured papers placed carelessly at the edge of his desk.

“Is this the press release for the game?” you inquired curiously, eyes scanning over the printed presentation slides sitting on his desk. He hummed dismissively, eyes held captive by the neon blue screen. “Is this the finished version?”

“More or less.”

“Who made this?” you probed as you sifted through the pages. “The actual presentation of the concept is awful. I would expect better from Kaiba Corp. Of course I know little of the actual content.”

You would be the first to admit that you were an excessively – sometimes unnecessarily - harsh critic when it came to presentation of things – though arguably among countless other things. You heard this on a daily basis and were infamous amongst your employees for frequently reducing people to tears over your severe, unforgiving comments. In some ways, perhaps you weren’t so different from your husband.

“I did.”

“The actual content is pretty impressive, it’s just presented in such a piss poor – wait what?”

Oops. You bit down on your lower lip - that had clearly earned his attention.

His narrowed gaze was utterly unnerving.

“I said,” he growled lowly, “I did it. If you haven’t noticed, I’ve been preoccupied as of late. The press release wasn’t exactly my first priority when the game play still required perfecting.”

You knew exactly what he meant by; you’ve been a distraction.

“Let me re-do it?” you offered apprehensively. He raised an eyebrow in response, waiting for you to continue, or so you assumed. “I’m like the queen of presentations. I mean think about it. All my products,” you paused, waving your hand in front of your face, referring to the appearance of your
idols and other talent, “are impeccably branded and presented. It’s how I made it to the top of my industry. My agency rivals SM in aesthetic.”

“What motivation would you have? You’re the head of Kodama,” he questioned, obviously skeptical. You couldn’t help but laugh lightly at his suspicion.

“You’re my husband, what other motivation would I have?” you asked, continuing to look through the twenty-four page thick stack of slides. “Would you even let me look at these if you really distrusted me? If you could get even ten extra minutes of sleep with me taking care of this for you, that’s good enough for me.”

He watched you fixedly for a few long moments, calculating your offer carefully behind those unsettling blue eyes.

“Fine,” he finally conceded.

“Send me a copy of this to work off of?”

“Seto,” you called asking for his attention. He looked up at you at your silence which demanded his undistracted responsiveness. “I didn’t—mean to tear down your work. It wasn’t bad, I’m just,” you bit your lip in thought as you arranged the appropriate words in your mind, carefully tasting the words before spitting them out, “I’m overly critical and I tend to be a perfectionist and—”

You had the sinking feeling that each word was just further wounding his pride, each additional word another bullet of salt.

“Don’t patronize me,” he demanded, “It was mediocre, I was aware. I’ve never accepted mediocrity as a standard from anyone, especially not myself. I’m not offended by you stating the truth.”

“Oh, okay,” you mumbled, unsure of how to interpret that. Had you hurt his pride or was he agreeing with you, or both? Setting down your laptop, you walked up to his desk. “Are we—are we good?” you questioned, peering down at him as you lay your hand on his shoulder.

“What are you talking about?” he snapped, turning to face you.

“Nothing,” you dismissed, a little too disconcerted by his sudden iced over attitude to properly convey your intentions as you had hoped to.

You retired back to the couch and worked wordlessly.

“I’m going to sleep,” he finally declared. Shifting your eyes to the small white characters at the bottom of your screen, you noted that it was almost six in the morning. That explained the tearing headache that was currently pulsing past your left eye. “Come with me.”

“No,” you declined, looking back at your screen following a quick glance in his direction. “I’m almost done.”

“We’re going to sleep,” he asserted, “that’s not good for your eyes.”

“You’re interrupting my train of thought. Go,” you dismissed a little stronger than perhaps necessary.
He only spared a few more seconds watching over you from the corner of the room before disappearing into the adjacent room.

He re-emerged in his casual attire roughly an hour later to find you in the same, curved over posture; feet still bound at an angle in the same heels you had worn almost twenty six hours prior. He immediately headed directly for you.


“I’m done. There are a few minor things to fix, but you should get the idea. I changed some of the introductions, I hope you don’t mind. I tried to not impose my personal style on it too much – ”

“I could care less about that right now. Get some sleep.”

“I have a board meeting. I left breakfast in the fridge. Can you heat it up yourself?”

He watched you incredulously for a moment.

“You’re going to work?”

“Did you not hear me bitching at my directors to be punctual? Wouldn’t look very good if I showed up late would it? Can you take care of breakfast or do you want me to -”

“I’m not a child,” he snapped.

“I dumped the coffee beans so don’t even think about it,” you added pushing past him to touch up your make up and change into a pant suit.

…

The next few days passed like the last. Somewhere along the lines, tending to his meals had become your responsibility entirely; at least, you knew your failure to be attentive towards them would entail your husband forgetting to so much as spare a thought in its direction.

The past few days you had found time to visit his office between schedules in time for lunch, each time to find the lunch his secretary had left on his desk untouched and neglected.

Helping with certain aspects of the launch project during ungodly hours of the night had become common practice and between this, running your own conglomerate, and caring for his wellbeing, you had found yourself playing an odd mix between being a trophy wife and being a businesswoman. The whole act was thoroughly exhausting, utterly draining and the days saw you getting less and less sleep, usually working straight through to morning, and all over again to the next break of dawn. What sleep you did get was what your body demanded out of necessity, forcing you to pass out against the window of your car or van, for typically a collective duration of fifteen to thirty minutes a day commuting between schedules.

Sleep was a luxury, something quiteironically your husband seemed to get more of, and so when he called you that Wednesday afternoon and advised you to meet him at the mansion at the conclusion of your schedules, you were ecstatic.

Reaching your bedroom around half seven that evening – partially unaware of exactly how you had navigated your way up, though you had tripped over your own feet an embarrassing number of times – your vision tunnelled, depriving you of seeing anything beyond the bed on the far side of
the room.

Your consciousness – or whatever remnants of it – did however notice the room was aglow with sunlight burning a faded orange, pouring past the curtains drawn open and through the slightly opened French windows and the transparent white draperies which were catching the light breeze that escaped into the room.

You only managed to allow your jade dress to pool to your feet before collapsing over the covers in the black slip dress which hardly covered your underwear that you had worn underneath.

The soft sheets welcomed you; your consciousness slipping from you within moments.

What you recalled registering following was the bedroom door closing and the edge of the bed dipping next to you. It felt almost immediate.

Eyes only opening to assess if you were in danger somehow, you found your husband loosening his tie as he sat over you, his suit jacket shed somewhere. The room was still softly lit by the last rays of sunlight, clear curtains catching the wind.

Propping yourself on your elbows, the cold evening breeze grazing your bare thighs, he leaned over you.

“I need you,” he declared lustfully, though your hazy mind only managed to comprehend his words and not his desires.

“What do you need?” you immediately questioned, bluntly, your practiced obligation speaking in the absence of common sense.

“Take this off,” he ordered huskily, though still retaining a gentle tone over the demanding one that threatened to take over.

He was already reaching for your back. The zipper was fastened on the side.

You weren’t sure why you obliged, slowly sliding the metal zip down the fine teeth of the zip closure, allowing him to carelessly pull the rough fabric of the slip over your head.

“You’re being an awfully good girl today,” he observed darkly, obviously pleased, hands behind your back unclasping your bra.

You heard the sharp clank of your bra’s hook against the marble, soon joined by the soft rustle of Seto’s shirt. His dress pants followed.

He clambered over you, sliding your lace underwear off your legs before anchoring his hands on either side of you.

“I hope you’re ready because I don’t have the patience for much else,” he declared, blue eyes smouldering.

You were so tired you could hardly see straight.
“This is the face I couldn’t get out of my head all day,” he declared darkly as he lowered his lips over yours, his bare chest rolling over exposed breasts, his hips grinding against yours.

You could feel his erection pressing against you.

“Be gentle with me,” you begged in a whisper, splaying your hands against his chest, as he pulled away enough for his lips to brush against yours.

His eyes told you he had other intentions, his expressions contorted almost apologetically as he brought a hand up to your face, before diving his fingers behind your head.

“I can’t promise that.”

His head fell to the crook of your neck, lips pushing against you.

His free hand slid between your bodies up to your breast, massaging it, thumb occasionally rolling over your nipple. You gasped at the sensation. His lips slipped away from your neck, ghosting over your collarbones down to your breasts, rousing a wave of goosebumps in its wake, hips pulling away from yours. His tongue swirled over the hardening nipple, leaving it slick with saliva. You felt a thumb brush over your other nipple before his lips found it. He bit down on it before sucking on it. You could feel his mouth drawing the skin in as he sucked.

A strained mewl left you, along with a mangled cry which distantly sounded like his name.

His hand traced the contours of your body to the heat between your legs, fingers rubbing against your entrance before slowly parting your lips. This earned him a breathy whimper.

The heaviness in your eyes was beginning to dissipate into a headache as you continued to deny your body of rest.

He thrust a finger into your folds, followed immediately by another, his impatience evident; forcing you to jerk upwards, as the arches of your body curved towards him. Your head curved up against his neck, as he moved up to hover over you again.

You could feel the cold breeze brushing past your nipples wet with his saliva.

The sensation of his fingers grating against your inner walls was always unfamiliar somehow, sending splintering shockwaves at the touch, through to your nerve endings.

Your fingers tangled in his hair, pulling him towards you and he complied, laying his forehead against yours. You could feel beads of your sweat dampening his fringe. His darkened blue eyes burnt lustfully.
“You’re beautiful,” he husked, his breath catching in your mouth past your parted lips.

“Seto,” you released a broken whisper, mildly dizzied from being deprived of oxygen, hips jerking up into him at the pressure his fingers were building in you.

“And you’re mine,” he declared hoarsely, though it was communicated more as a command.

You nodded your head faintly, eyes closed, lower lip bitten in an attempt to control the irrepressible shudders that coursed across your weary body.

“Deeper.” You could feel a burning and a wetness cutting the warmth. Your whimpering ceaseless, you begged for more. “Seto, please, deeper.”

His deep chuckle reverberated through the room, and you could feel the vibration against his chest.

“That’s enough,” he grunted, pulling his fingers out of you, bringing them against his mouth before reaching for his briefs, swiftly discarding it beyond the bed.

“Not like last time,” you pleaded, breath hitching in your throat as your eyes fell over his exposed erection. Your muscles reflexively clenched in apprehension. You could feel your ears burning, the sensation slowly spreading to your throat, consuming the captured air.

“If you relax yourself, it won’t hurt. I can’t do anything about it,” he scolded.

Your hand reached up to his face, faintly shaking your head in an attempt to persuade him to be gentle. He wasn’t the type of man to be convinced.

“Don’t look at me like that, focus on relaxing yourself,” he repeated sonorously, eyes never softening. “Stop being weak, this isn’t your first time, or even your second. I think I’ve held back enough.”

Folding your knees to angle your hips, he pinned your wrists above your head with one hand. Your feet stretched in apprehension, toes curling.

“You’re doing the opposite of what I’m asking you,” he barked, positioning himself at your entrance. You threw your head back, squeezing your eyes tightly. “We can do this the other way, do you want to do it yourself?” he questioned harshly, to which you shook your head violently.

“I’m sorry, I’m ready,” you gasped between the erratic pace your breathing had climbed to, chest rising and falling rapidly.

“I’m not hurting you because I want to,” he finally added in a gentler tone. “Open your eyes, look at me.” You hesitantly complied. “Know that I love you,” he declared, before sharply thrusting his entire length in, or at least he tried. “Fuck, you’re still so fucking tight,” he groaned.

Hands bound, your body could only lurch into a bow, incoherent babbling escaping your lips at feeling your walls stretching unreadily around him. Tears produced themselves as they always did.

“You’re being too rough,” you bit back somewhat articulately. He pulled out, before sinking back in slower, your walls parting to accommodate his girth. A drawn moan ascending into a sharp cry left your lips. Head falling up towards the headboard, you cried his name.

“You know it’s momentary,” he reassured huskily, gritting his teeth, pulling out slowly. You exhaled feeling the pressure dissipate, only for him to ram back in again almost immediately. You clenched at the unexpected motion, worsening the tearing pain that would otherwise have been

“Just make it feel good already,” you whined.

“You did better the first time,” he snapped, and you could feel a wave of disappointment wash over you.

“I’m sorry,” you sniffled, tears welling.

“Please don’t cry while we do this,” he demanded harshly, continuing to thrust into you roughly. “I didn’t mean it that way. You’re just very – small,” he grunted, faltering with his words. “Fuck,” he groaned, throwing his head back momentarily as he watched over your distraught expression, “you’re really going to – should I stop?”

“No.”

“Then stop making that face. Does it still hurt?” he questioned, as he rolled his hips into yours. Managing to salvage your mind from the overly-emotional state your weariness had reduced you to, you realized the pain had dissipated, giving way to pleasure rippling through you from your lower abdomen.

“It feels good,” you moaned, fighting the burning sensation threatening to claim your eyes, demanding sleep.

“Of course it does,” he groaned.

Your body writhing under him, trembling with each plunge, you could feel his pace grow faster and harder, each thrust reaching deeper and deeper into you.

His grunts overshadowed your weak moans, his panting punctuating his groans. The room heard a cacophony of soft cries, flesh meeting flesh over and over, and the wet sound of your juices mixing each time, distinctly in the background.

He released your arms, both his hands hooking under your thighs, angling your better towards him. “Wrap your legs around me,” he grunted demandingly, and you obeyed. “Good girl.”

His cock met your sensitive bundle of nerves directly at this angle and your hands shot up to his shoulders, nails digging into him. The drowsiness that was plaguing you left you, at least in that moment, the stimulation forcing you to full awareness.

“Seto, yes, there…ah…Seto, Seto, yes,” he whimpered.

“Do you like that?” he questioned tauntingly, leaning over, tilting his head as he traced his lips up past the dip between your clavicles, sucking in the skin over your throat.

Your legs still hooked around his waist, he laid over you, his lips against your ears.

“You feel so good,” he grunted, driving your senses wild. His hot breath breaking against your damp skin was only intensifying the feeling. “I’ve been waiting all day for this. This is all I could – think about - through all my meetings – that face - doing this to you –you’re a distraction.”

All you could manage in return were disjointed moaning, earning another chuckle from him.

“Do you know what you do to me?” he husked.

Your body flushed all over under dampened skin, hands finding his back, nails scraping against his
toned muscles.

“Harder,” you begged, “I promise I can take it, please. I need you.”

Your husband complied, bringing himself into you rougher and rougher, at a furious pace.

“Yes… oh god, just like that. Seto,” you stuttered desperately. “Oh god, Seto… you’re so big…oh yes, yes.”

He laughed darkly in your ear.

Pulling himself up to hover over you again, his blue eyes fell over your naked form, your hair drenched against your face, whole body flushed and sweating, unravelling for him as you wantonly called his name.

“You look beautiful like this,” he rasped. You could feel his cock moving deep inside you. You were exhausted, but you still wanted him. Each moment of friction was euphoric. Every bit of pressure threatened to send you over the edge, but the cool breeze pouring through the cracked window pricking your skin kept you grounded, affording you relief from the scorching heat his cock welled inside you and flooded through you. “I should take you to work with me,” he groaned, “so I can have my way with you whenever I want you. Fuck, you’re beautiful.”

If only you could find the words to tell him how attractive he looked. Each time he pounded into you, the way his sweat sodden fringe flicked forwards, the way his blue eyes burned, the way his facial muscles; those chiseled features clenched; groaning your name, how his veins protruded through his muscular arms, beads of sweat rolling over them - seeing this was enough to make you come for him. You wanted to tell him, you desperately wanted to, but words – coherent thought – eluded you. He had robbed you of all sense.

“Seto… I’m – I’m so close,” you told him breathily, body quivering.

“No you’re not, not yet,” he demanded, suddenly slowing his pace to deep, purposeful strokes, “you’re not coming until I say you can.”

The abrupt change in pace broke a shudder across you, chilling you; a coiling sensation fizzled through your abdomen, disappearing.

“Seto, please,” you pleaded. You had been so close – not that the pressure dissipated entirely, but you could feel yourself reaching your climax much slower now.

“Wait for me,” you grunted.

“You’re so selfish,” you bit back incoherently, before dissolving back into a mess of moans.

“I’ll do with you what I want, stop complaining,” he groaned in your ear, though he lowered himself against you and snaking his arms around you, pulled you tightly against him. “Brace yourself,” he advised, but bound against him; there was hardly anything you could do for yourself.

Without sparing another second, he built his pace back up again to a rapid speed, burying himself deeper into you with each sharp plunge.

You found loud cries which bordered on screams leaving you, feeling soreness where his skin beat against yours. You were sure this would leave a very painful bruise. You could feel the sheets under you soaking through between your thighs.
“Is that better for you?” he demanded through gritted teeth, speed not once faltering. You couldn’t seem to form any sound besides sharp cries against the crook of his neck, nails raking his back repeatedly.

Somewhere mid cry, you felt the tension explode in a splintering sensation between your legs, your instinctive arching was restrained by your husband forcefully holding you in place. Your legs around him tightened until numbness overtook them.

“Seto,” you screamed out his name against his ear, feeling your body defiantly jerk despite being held. A white noise drowned you, a shiver sweeping under your scalp and down your spine, meeting the sensation of fire rippling up from your lower abdomen, rendering you limp as your body deprived physical control from you. “I’m yours,” you whispered weakly, possibly disjointedly.

Each time he made you come was as shattering and beautiful as the last.

“Of course you’re mine,” he husked, his pace unrelenting.

Euphoria obscuring you of all sense, you could only distantly register your husband’s face closing over yours as he kissed you.

His kiss wasn’t demanding as it usually was, or perhaps you were in too numb a state to properly feel it.

You thought you had heard him utter the words ‘I love you,’ though you couldn’t be certain.

Your consciousness returned to find your body quivering irrepessibly, spasms moving your fingertips even after you rode out your high. You understood that your body had finally hit a wall, exhaustion paralyzing fine nerve control.

“Seto, I don’t feel right,” you told him, and his eyes narrowed with concern.

“What do you mean?” he questioned, continuing to thrust into you.

“I’m really tired,”

“Of course you are,” he smirked. Clearly you hadn’t communicated your point properly.

“No,” you breathed, “I’m shaking.”

“You’re fine,” he dismissed.

You were forced to endure it for a while longer before Seto’s breathing grew ragged and laboured; his pace faltering.

You could tell by the way his cursing grew incoherent that he was reaching his limit. He tucked his head in the crook of your neck, clenching his muscles against you, breath falling in broken waves over the skin of your neck.

The continued friction became intolerable inside you having grown sensitive.

Pressing himself tighter against you, his lips found your neck again as he throbbed inside you, drawing your walls against his cock.

“Seto,” you called weakly.
He grunted in response.

His hips rocked against yours a few more stokes before his entire body weighed heavily against you, as he groaned raucously, calling out your name hoarsely; his voice breaking against the walls and echoing back.

His cock throbbed again, more violently, his seeds exploding into you, filling you.

He wouldn’t pull out of you, though he turned to lay supine against the sheets, you straddling him on top.

He panted quite aggressively, your body rising and falling with his chest. You could feel his arms weigh against your sore back.

Your body continued to shake weakly as you rested your head against his chest, listening to his erratic heartbeat.

He leaned forward, kissing your hairline and in spite of your exhaustion, you could feel your heart still flutter. Angling his head to the side, he kissed your cheek, causing your fingers to close over his chest, gripping him, a faint smile finding your lips. He reached further, kissing your ear once, almost unsurely, before showering your neck with kisses.

“Did I do that well?” you questioned jokingly, not expecting an answer, definitely not a serious one.

“You always do.”

You offered him another worn smile, placing your cheek against his chest slick with sweat, allowing sleep to claim you.

A mere few moments must have passed before he called your name.

“We need to get you cleaned up,” he abruptly stated. “You can’t fall asleep.”

“Seto, I’m so tired I can barely see straight. I also can’t feel my legs after what you just did, let me be,” you mumbled, already half asleep.

“No,” he disputed irritably, “I need you to get ready for a dinner with my board executives, now.”

You didn’t appreciate, well, anything about that sentence really, especially not the revelation and tone.

“You called me home to have sex with you?” you accused disbelievingly.

“Bluntly put, yes.”

You didn’t think there was a way to sugar coat or romanticize, ‘I used you as a toy to relieve my sexual frustration and now that I’m done thoroughly fucking you, I need you to be a refined and elegant trophy for the rest of the night.’

“I wasn’t using you,” he declared firmly, as if reading your mind, “I haven’t been with you this way in a long time and needed it.”
“You realize you haven’t even pulled out of me and you’re already – I can’t believe you,” you snapped, held in place against your will by his arms. “Go on your own.”

“All the director’s wives will be there, so I want mine to be with me.”

You wouldn’t realize he was trying to show you off.

“Ask me if I care.”

“What will it take for you to come with me?” he sighed reluctantly.

“Take me shopping.”

“What?”

“Was I not clear?”

“Is there anything you can’t afford for yourself?” he questioned evidently perplexed.

“Seto – it’s the gesture. It doesn’t matter if my bank account matches yours. You’re the definition of filthy rich. Spend your money on me.”

“Fine, if that’s what you want. Is that all you’re asking for?” he inquired gruffly.

“Can I ask for more?” He hummed in response. “I don’t know; take me to the fun fair that’s coming to town at the end of spring?”

“Out of the question.”

“Please…honey, for me?” you puffed your cheeks into a pout, imitating what you had seen – and sometimes were forced to do – on Korean variety shows. You cringed, feeling your own skin crawl. He however, deserved every moment of discomfort this was subjecting him to.

“Never do that again!” he snapped harshly, stressing ever word, gently laying you on your back as he pulled out of you. “I’ll think about it.”

“Going to the fun fair?” you questioned, as he leaned over you on his side.

“Yes. Now will you get dressed?” he growled, clenching his jaw. “I already have a dress picked out for you.”

“You’ll seriously consider going?”

“I already said yes.”

…

The dress was a deep cobalt in a heavy satin. It had an ‘x’ draped sweetheart neckline. The dress fell flared at the waist and reached past your knees; a deep slit travelling all the way back up to your waist, exposing a mid-thigh length skirt underneath. A gold, sapphire studded belt adorned the waist and travelled up the center of the neckline in a ‘y’ shape, wrapping around the neck.

Seto had picked out a pair of gold, heeled sandals to match, along with a single gold, sapphire studded bangle.
You noticed the dress complimented his blue tie and cufflinks, and more prominently, his eyes.

Your hair was straightened, parted down the middle, and swept behind your shoulders.

“There was also a light blue dress from this collection, I’m surprised you didn’t pick that one,” you noted, dusting a light coat of blush over your cheeks.

“It’s already altered and hanging in your closet; I want you to wear that for the game launch.”

Asked and answered, again.

“What’s this dinner for?”

“Securing a deal with a Chinese retailer. You’ll be expected to speak in Mandarin for the greater part of the night.”

…

Descending the front steps of the mansion, it became clear why he had guided you away from the garage.

“We’re taking the limo?” you questioned, a tinge of displeasure in your tone as you looked on at the black vehicle.

He had his arm wrapped around your waist, forcing you to walk against him.

“Driving would distract too much of my attention,” he responded blandly.

Away from what?

Approaching the unnecessarily ostentatious vehicle, the driver bowed to the both of you, holding the door open. Seto guided you in, holding his hand above your head, guarding it cautiously from the roof of the door, before slipping in himself.

You chose to sit on the side row of seating against the window instead of the backseat, intentionally away from him. That at least had been your intention until meeting his irritated gaze, you decided against the idea, moving to sit on the back seat to his left.

“Have I offended you in some way?” he questioned, genuinely oblivious, as you crossed your arms over your chest, leaning forward slightly as he moved to close the space between you two.

“I don’t know what would make you say such a thing.”

“You’re being passive aggressi– ” he began to say, only to be interrupted by your phone ringing.

With you answering it, he was momentarily forced to hold his thoughts.

“It’s me,” you greeted the producer on the other end of the line.

“Good evening, I realize it’s late, my apologies for that, but would you have some time to discuss the proposal we’ve been meaning to review?” the young man on the other side inquired politely.

“Hold on a second,” you advised, holding the phone away from you, addressing your husband, “how long is this drive going to take?”

“Thirty – possibly forty minutes with traffic. Why?”
“How much time do you need?” you questioned the producer.

“Thirty minutes, maximum, even less is fine.”

“Alright, I’m listening,” you managed to agree, inviting him to speak, only to be disturbed by your husband placing his hand over your phone, demanding your attention. “Hold on a quick second,” you advised the producer, interrupting him. “What is it?” you hissed at Seto.

“You don’t have time for that,” he declared firmly.

“You just said the drive would take forty minutes with traffic, why not?” you demanded to know, placing the call on mute. “You take calls like this all the time.”

He abruptly reached into his grey suit jacket.

“Here, hold on to this for the night,” he offered, holding out his phone.

Not entirely sure of what he was playing at, thoroughly apprehensive of what you were convinced was another one of his manipulative schemes, you unmuted the call.

“I’m really sorry; I’ll have to call you back. Something came up,” my husband insists on throwing a fit, “can we reschedule this? You can arrange a time with my secretary.”

“Which one?”

“Any one of them should be able to help you,” you advised apologetically, bidding him a good night before disconnecting the line. “What the hell was that about?” you questioned dangerously. “I can’t keep your phone, what if an emergency comes up?”

“I’ll have yours,” he answered bluntly, snatching your phone away from your fingers. “What’s your password?”

“What’s yours?”

“791257.”

“That’s so random. What?”

“Just register your fingerprint,” he sighed in exasperation, holding the screen up, urging for you to place your finger.

“And you expect me to allow you similar access to my phone?” you questioned uneasily.

“Do you have anything to hide?”

“No…”

“Then I don’t see the issue,” he drawled.

You watched him hesitantly for a moment longer before snatching your phone back, punching in your password habitually, after fumbling for a few moments with the fingerprint reader which kept rejecting your foundation smudged tips.

“090805? Is that some kind of date?”

His eyes were sharp; you wouldn’t deny him of that compliment.
“Here,” you offered him your phone, taking his in exchange, beginning the tedious process of registering your fingerprint.

Pocketing your phone, he slipped an arm around your shoulders, pulling you against him.

“I feel I’ve been neglecting you,” he spoke in a low voice against your ear, from what you could sense, breathing in the scent of your hair. A very conspicuous shudder broke across your body. “You’re like a drug, you know that?”

*What?*

“I’m…harmful?” you questioned densely, sensible thought long obscured by fatigue.

“No,” he smothered a laugh, “You’re addicting.”

His arm tightened around you, turning your body towards him, as he buried his face in your hair against your crown.

You couldn’t help but release a heavy sigh. You were quite possibly the only woman who would sigh so despondently while being held so tenderly by Seto Kaiba.

There was so much accumulated resentment and exhaustion that your husband was failing to sense, his vision tunneling solely around pushing his own agenda.

Or perhaps behind your iron curtain of discontentment, you were unwilling to see his efforts to provide you some solace through his - sometimes misguided - affection.

“What’s wrong,” he questioned worriedly, looking down at you.

“Nothing, everything’s perfect.”

“Don’t think I haven’t noticed your hostility, and don’t think I don’t know when it started. We’ll talk about this, later;” he snapped roughly, “just hold it together and don’t make it obvious at the dinner. I want you on your best behaviour.”

“I’m not some petulant child,” you bit back, attempting to escape his hold, though he wouldn’t relent.

“You certainly act like one.”

“So much for saying you love me.”

“I do,” he growled, “I wouldn’t be holding you like this otherwise.”

“Whatever Seto, is Mokuba coming?

“No, he was away on business in the States, and his flight got cancelled due to the hurricane.”

“That’s disappointing,” you admitted. “I hope he’s alright?”

There was no way Seto would be sitting here so calmly if he wasn’t.

“He’s fine.”

He continued to embrace you for the rest of the drive, though he wouldn’t speak.
You must have fallen asleep that way, because next you were roused, Seto was calling your name.

“We’re here, wake up,” he advised. Still bleary eyed, your body begging for more sleep, you caved to its demands, incoherently denying his words, pulling yourself closer to his chest with your hands that had snaked around him sometime during your slumber.

It was when the door was opened; the light from the outside lamppost pouring into the darkened limo and Seto’s voice grew harsher that you finally peeled your eyes open.

“Seto I don’t think I can do this, I’m too tired,” you mumbled into his chest, hair falling over your face like a curtain.

“People are watching, I told you to behave yourself,” he barked in a hushed whisper, “get up, fix your hair,” he paused, tilting your face up to inspect it as he brushed your hair away from your face, “fix your – uh – makeup, there’s black smudged around your eye.”

Oh dear god, you could only imagine.

Against your temple, under his suit jacket, you could feel something which you assumed was a gun pressing against you, though you couldn’t be certain in your drained state and didn’t have the mindset to ask.

From your peripheral, you noticed quite a few members of Seto’s board were standing by the entrance of the building.

Accessing the situation, catching Kaoru’s eye as you tore yourself away from your husband, you couldn’t help but believe at least to some extent, despite his sternness, Seto had allowed the door to open when he had on purpose. There was a fair amount of ambiguity obscuring his intentions, but you couldn’t be convinced entirely against it. The man was too calculating and too carefully guarded.

Stepping out of the limo with your arm in his, there was that soreness that had escalated into a throbbing pain after sitting stiffly in the same attitude.

“Walk slower,” you whispered to your husband. His height was already working against you as it was.

“Why?” he asked bluntly, peering down at you.

“Why do you think?”

“It’s like dealing with some flower,” he bit back a growl in realization, obviously irritated.

His temper being on a short leash was his issue to work through, as your current predicament was yours.

Walking up the ornate steps of the hotel to greet the board directors, there were too many things – your supposedly smudged eyeliner, the aching pain between your legs, your incapacitating exhaustion – distracting you to sensibly pay attention to Seto’s introduction of all the men, your eyes awkwardly fixed on Kaoru’s through the white noise, which was a better alternative you assured yourself than having your eyelids drop halfway closed mid conversation.

You wondered in the haze of your fatigue what the emotion glinting in the young director’s eye
The intense gaze was broken by your husband pulling you forward into the lobby.

“Go fix your make up,” he advised, directing you towards the bathrooms, “I’ll wait here”

The smudge your husband had made note of was hardly noticeable, even upon close inspection and intense scrutiny, and after carefully glancing over the rest of your appearance, you left the bathroom, intending to join your husband.

Who you were instead greeted by in the dimly lit hallway, should hardly have surprised you.

“You look ravishing,” Kaoru offered, leaning away from the wall where he appeared to have waited for you.

“Thank you.”

“May I?” he inquired, offering you his arm. You curtly refused. This refusal was seemingly received as an invitation to continue speaking where you both currently stood. “You gave such an impression to the members of the board, including myself – you and Mr. Kaiba – of a couple who were very familiar with each other,” the all too familiar narrative began to unfold before you could begin to intervene. “Have I perhaps not been clear with my intentions?”

“Excuse me?”

“I’m interested in you and would very much like to date you,” he offered brazenly.

“And what part of I’m a married woman - married to the CEO of the corporation you work for might I add – have I not made clear? You’re offering to date a married woman Mr. Hidehira, does that not sound ridiculous to you, even ignoring moral propriety? I no longer wish to entertain your proposal or intentions. You seem like a very – honest gentleman but this is where our acquaintanceship should stop. I’m quite content with my husband and have no intention of being unfaithful to him.”

“I can offer you much more than –”

“You can offer me affection?” you questioned him, well aware of the words that would have followed. He merely nodded. “Mr. Kaiba showers me with plenty of affection.”

“I find that hard to believe,” he scoffed. “Not the way I could, I could make you feel so much more,” he continued stubbornly.

You’ve had it. You’ve been subjected to enough irritation courtesy of one man and didn’t wish to bear the burden of another’s antics.

“Really? You can? Would you like me to tell you how he made me feel in the bedroom earlier this evening, because if that’s the variety of clarity you’re after, I would be more than happy to descriptively explain to you.”

He seemed genuinely taken aback by your own dose of bold words.

“I didn’t realize the two of you were so intimate.”

“Oh, the two of us are much more than you and I ever will be. Like I said, I’m perfectly content
with my husband, please leave me alone.”

“Consider my offer,” he persisted, gripping you by your forearm. “You’re young enough; I can prevent this divorce from tainting your reputation, I possess that kind of power.”

“Mr. –”

“Hidehira you two faced snake, get your filthy hands off of my wife,” Seto’s voice thundered down the hallway. Storming down to where the two of you stood, Seto roughly tore you away from the young director. You were forced to stand behind your husband. “I think I warned you to stay away from my woman,” he hissed, venom dripping from every word.

Kaoru was rendered speechless, whether due to fear or other reasons, from your current position behind your husband, you couldn’t tell.

“I was only looking out for her wellbeing,” Kaoru offered in stutters.

“I don’t recall that being a part of your job description. I think I warned you what happen to snakes like you who touch the Kaiba family.”

A few moments passed before the director attempted to and miserably failed to produce a coherent apology and hastily excused himself. Seto made no motion to stop him. One thing to understand of your husband was that his silence was to be feared infinitely more than his vocalised anger.

“Divorce?” he demanded to know, spinning to catch your gaze.

“Seto, it’s not what it looks like – you - I asked him to leave me alone,” you frantically declared.

“Do you not believe me?” you questioned desperately.

“I told you to stay away from that man,” he scolded, his voice descending to a gentler register.

“I’m sorry,” you offered, wrapping your arms around him, laying your head on his chest.

“There are only so many times I can find you innocent, remember that,” he warned, bringing his hand against the back of your head, stiffly stroking your hair.

Those words, in spite of the gentle tone they were delivered in, you couldn’t help but receive with indignation; you hardly felt you deserved to be held accountable when you had defended your relationship with such earnest.

As you stepped back, hands falling back to your side, you couldn’t conceal your emotions, you imagined indignation burnt a deep scarlet on your face, and while Seto refrained from commenting, you were certain he wasn’t oblivious to it.

He stoically offered you his hand, guiding you to the grand hall where the dinner was held.

Entering the white marble hall with pillars stretching to the ceiling; decorated in hues of light blue, silver and white, you found yourself wondering what your husband’s obsession was with a playing card that perpetually compelled him to decorate everything to be reminiscent of it. He took lucky charms to a whole new level of crazy. Then again you observed, while he hardly grew an interest in anything, always indifferent and uncaring of almost everyone and everything surrounding him, once something does capture his attention, he had the tendency to grow fixated on those things, often to an obsessive degree; his work, that children’s card game and now you. Suddenly, his comment about you being addictive made much more sense.
By this time, his business partner from China had arrived, and Seto briskly walked across the oval hall, carelessly dragging you by the arm.

You were introduced to the Chinese CEO appearing to be in his early fifties, president Feng, as Seto’s fiancée. You were grateful for the older man not commenting about your age or appearance, merely extending that he was honoured to be in the presence of such an accomplished young woman.

Surrounded by your husband’s directors – including one that was currently the subject of Seto’s personal ire – the group of businessmen, only occasionally punctuated by a woman; who was almost always a wife – if not a daughter – fell into conversation about the deal they had successfully secured. Not to do your own sex a disservice but it was painfully obvious from the looks on their faces that they were thoroughly ignorant to the discussion, a stark contrast from you, who, though comprehended the jargon exceedingly well, elected not to participate as you felt it not your place.

A few servers arrived shortly, offering the party canapes and a variety of alcohols ranging from champagne and prosecco to wines and harder liquors. Your hand, as should have been expected was emphatically restrained by your husband, accompanied by a pointed comment about how you should be more ‘careful given your current condition.’

Perhaps it was oversight on his part to – perhaps it was intentional - upon being asked if you were unable to hold your alcohol, denying that this was his reason.

You were joined a few moments following this exchange by the Chinese president’s wife and two daughters.

“If I’m honest,” the president confessed, “I hear a lot about you from my daughters on a daily basis. In fact, I probably hear more of your life than of my own daughters’.”

You were advised that of the two daughters, the youngest was a few months younger than you, the older, a couple of years older. Of the two daughters, both of whom were incredibly beautiful, the oldest was much more reserved and sensible, while the youngest looked to be forcefully restraining what appeared to be her bubbling enthusiasm.

“I hope I’m not interrupting,” the youngest began apprehensively, “I’m such a huge fan – you’re like my ultimate favourite idol. I can’t believe I got to meet you on my first visit to Japan. I’ve always wanted to work for your company. I’ve seen every idol from your company perform, never missed a concert. I was much too nervous to audition to become an actress, and now I’m too old, so I’m thinking of applying for administration,” she declared breathlessly, her nervous smile growing wider with each word. She seemed genuinely passionate.

“Mei Xiu, I told you to mind your manners,” president Feng interjected, scolding his daughter for her boldness.

You exchanged a glance with Seto. He seemed content with reserving himself to listen.

“It’s alright,” you assured, “I hardly think you’re too old. I mean, I’m still working,” you disagreed wittily, earning you a laugh from her father. “If you’re interested, I’d be more than happy to arrange a private audition.”

“Really? You’re serious?” she perked, elated. This excitement was met with another warning to behave more respectfully towards you from her father.
“So long as your father is not against it. You obviously have the appearance to be an actress, I had wanted to ask if you had any interest in the entertainment industry but didn’t want to be too forward. I’m pleased you didn’t have such reservations and brought it up.”

“I think it’s a marvelous idea,” the older businessman agreed, sincerely pleased.

“She’s made me wait in line to meet you at one of your fan meets in Beijing for twelve hours,” the older sister, Mei Xiang finally spoke up, joining the conversation, “We waited in line until sometime after midnight when the event had to be brought to a close.”

“I’m so sorry,” you offered, feeling terrible, and somewhat embarrassed.

This was usually the case with most fan meetings where you simply couldn’t meet every single person that had come to see you simply because of the sheer number your appearances drew.

“Oh it’ quite alright,” the younger interrupted, “You held the fan meet for an extra six hours than originally planned. You also came down to say hello to all of us that couldn’t see you in person. My sister and I were really worried about meeting you because sometimes meeting your idols have the effect of disenchanting you but you didn’t do that for us, so thank you.”

“You’re very kind,” you thanked, genuinely touched.

“I didn’t realize you also spoke Mandarin,” Kaoru entered himself into the conversation, after listening intently to what his interpreter had been translating for him of your words.

“Oh she speaks a lot more than that,” Mei Xiu interjected again knowingly, having listened to her own translator, “She speaks Korean, English, French – ” she began to say, soon to be interrupted by her father and berated for her continued imprudence, which you found oddly refreshing.

“On the topic of China,” Kaoru continued, “I hear you were offered the leading role of Empress Shi in Kingdoms of the Sun, congratulations, I heard many notable actresses from across Asia were vying for the position.”

Oh no.

“If you were offered to play Empress Shi,” president Feng thoughtfully noted, “given that it’s a trilogy, should you accept, you would be in China for an extended period of time, possibly for many months at a time over several years. That is excellent news; do let me know if we could be of service, we would love to host you at least once during your stay.”

His wife also very eagerly agreed to the notion.

“I do wonder what Mr. Kaiba thinks of this arrangement, having his dear fiancée live apart from him for a number of months, possibly immediately following the wedding,” a Chinese executive of president Feng’s board voiced.

“What are your thoughts?” Kaoru probed.

You could feel Seto’s gaze burning through you. You hadn’t the chance to mention the proposal to him, not that you had been considering the script with any seriousness; you hadn’t even auditioned.

“I will obviously respect her decision,” Seto declared through gritted teeth, suppressing his aggression.

The conversation after this fell away from you, much to your relief and pursued the course of
whatever it had been prior to the president Feng’s daughter joining it.

Seto’s grip on you seemed to grow tighter, though perhaps that was as a result of him clenching his muscles in a continued effort to subdue his severe irritation.

A while more of this conversation, not once differing from its topic endured, before Seto’s phone started vibrating incessantly in your purse. Retrieving it discreetly, you saw Mokuba’s caller ID displayed across the screen.

“It’s your brother,” you advised your husband quietly.

“Answer it,” he ordered dismissively, training his attention back on the conversation.

Excusing yourself, the call was dropped much before you could answer it, and almost habitually, you placed your finger over the reader of your husband’s phone, unlocking it as you turned away from the group, dialling for Mokuba. This whole happening was not unnoticed by Kaoru, who remembered his CEO’s phone particularly well.

Mokuba had only been calling to update his brother that his arrival back in Tokyo as of right now was indefinite.

Turning to walk back into the hall, you were joined by Seto, a firm scowl weighing his face.

“What did Mokuba need?” he inquired.

“Nothing, he just wants to tell you that with the weather conditions, he doesn’t know when he’ll be able to come back as of right now.”

Your husband offered you his arm to walk you back, along with a distracted hum signifying his acknowledgement.

“Isn’t she charming?” you questioned Seto of president Feng’s younger daughter as you walked, “She’s such a doll,” you gushed, smiling, sincerely thrilled to have met her, “She’s so pretty, my goodness.”

“She’s average,” Seto disagreed in a dull tone.

“Average?” you repeated disbelievingly, “Well I’d hate to hear what you have to say of me if you thought she was average. Did we see the same person?”

“I think I’ve told you countless times today what I think of you.”

“Not when I’m naked and screaming your name,” you threw his words back to him, mockingly.

“I see you that way all the time.”

You paused mid-step, your arm around his, tugging him back slightly.

“Seto,” you cooed, looking up at him adoringly.

“We need to have a serious talk when we get home,” he returned your affection with a stern gaze, followed by harsher words. “I don’t know where you got off thinking you don’t need to share your life with me, but that’s a conversation we’ll have later. We also need to have a conversation about you openly discussing our relationship because your silence is creating more misunderstandings
than I care for.”

You watched him enfolded in absolute shock.

Your conversation was forced to come to a close as you joined the dinner table. Seto pulling out your chair for you as you took your seat, before seating himself.

As dinner progressed – your appetite non-existent for the French cuisine being served, though you were certain it would have been the case regardless of the menu – you grew increasingly weary. Worsening to such a state at some point towards the middle of the main course where your eyes could only afford you blurry images of your surroundings, your head numbing as if freezing over. You gripped Seto’s suit jacket sleeve inconspicuously.

He snapped his head to look at you.

“What?” he hissed, obviously displeased with you following the earlier exchange.

“I don’t feel right,” you whispered.

“You’ve been saying that since earlier, hold it in for an hour or two,” he commanded.

He obviously had no concept for the severity of your condition. And yet you forced yourself to comply. You certainly had no intention of disappearing mid-way through a second director’s dinner.

Another agonizing few minutes passed before, while distractedly gazing down at the glass of clear, fizzling liquid of your soft drink you held over your lap, you grew alarmed seeing what you at first recognized as red ink dissolving in a fading ripple.

You watched in confusion as another drop fell in, followed by a third, each disappearing across the surface as the last had, tinting your drink a pale pink. Initially, you looked up at the ceiling, before a moist sensation over your upper lip compelled you to bring your fingers against it. Pulling your fingers away, you gasped at the redness colouring your fingertips. Your reaction had been muted, but it didn’t fail to garner your husband’s attention.

Before his eyes fell over your bleeding nose, his hand instantly wrapped around yours tainted with blood, inspecting it with evident concern before flicking up to your face.

Quickly shielding the unsightly bleeding from the dinner guests, you excused yourself promptly, leaving everyone but your husband in obvious confusion.

You returned to be bombarded with questions regarding your abrupt departure, all you quite vaguely deflected.

The rest of the night passed slightly less eventfully, and to say that you were relieved to see the Chinese party sent off at the end of the night would have been an understatement.

The living dead possessed more life and fine motor control than you did in that moment.

Standing under the doorway of the grand hall, surrounded by Seto’s directors, you desperately hung on to his arm for stability, as the group of men insisted on speaking to him regarding useless shit, despite your constant urging to Seto to retire for the night.

“I heard you rebranded the marketing campaign,” one man addressed you forcefully requesting your already absent attention. “It was quite impressive.”
“Yes, it was a bold move electing to work over Mr. Hidehira’s proposal,” another agreed.

You hadn’t been aware you had been working over his plan. Seto hadn’t mentioned such a thing.

“I think we can all agree,” Seto interjected arrogantly, “that my wife did a much better job of the task in comparison to the disordered mess Hidehira proposed.”

Nervous laughter conveying hesitant agreement was shared between the men. Kaoru chose to reserve himself to silence.

“It was certainly very generous of you to offer your expertise to Kaiba Corp. given your position at Kodama,” another member eventually chimed.

“The strategy is time sensitive and particularly tailored to drive sales for the concept of Kaiba Corp.’s game,” you managed to coherently string your sentence, “The strategy cannot be replicated nor copied for anything else. Kodama doesn’t currently have anything to fit this design. If it did, I would not have been so generous.”

“Spoken like a true businesswoman,” the first director laughed.

“Regardless, very innovative and sharp,” another concurred.

This pointless train of conversation occasionally punctuated with praise or a comment in your direction endured until Kaoru abruptly elected to speak, addressing you directly, seemingly distressed.

“Your – you’re bleeding,” he informed, eyes wide in alarm as he motioned towards your face. Your hand immediately clasped over your upper lip reflexively, as Seto spun you around to look at you.

Your eyes met his, openly pooled with concern, the group of directors simultaneously erupting into a fit of anxious conversation in the background. You registered your husband reaching his other hand to hold you, and for a moment you wondered why he did such a thing.

Slipping into darkness, feeling your knees folding under you, you subconsciously comprehended why.

…

Waking up to a familiar, incessant beeping, a dull ache on your left arm, you understood where you were without needing your vision to afford you clarity. The hospital bed was torment on your sore back.

Finally opening your eyes, you saw your husband pacing back and forth restlessly across the private hospital room, a large window behind you to your right illuminating the dark space with the light of a street lamp outside.

The unnerving silence and the much more unsettling beeps of the various monitors were only interrupted by the steady puffs of the humidifier to the left of your bedside.

Your stirring drew Seto’s attention.

“You’re awake,” he noted with unrestrained frustration, stalking up to your bed. He carelessly threw a collection of papers which appeared to be your medical reports over the covers of your bed. “Explain to me what the hell this is. I thought we agreed to get your health back together before having children. At this rate – ” he faltered, sighing heavily in exasperation, running his fingers
through his hair as he turned away from you for a moment. “What are you thinking with this?”
This chapter gets really personal, perhaps to an uncomfortable extent to some, fair warning.

“Is this how you’re handling your health? Your red blood count is dangerously low, your iron levels are anemic and hemoglobin levels are – your blood is basically just water. You could drop dead like this,” he bellowed. You were left wondering if this was his version of ‘worried sick.’ “At this rate, we’ll never have children, in fact at this rate; I might not even have a wife. I think I made myself clear when I told you that I will consider how seriously you regard your own life as a direct indication of how you hold mine. What do you think this tells me?”

“Are you worrying about me right now?” you questioned quietly, “because you’re making me feel like shit.”

“Of course I am,” he snarled, clenching his jaw.

“I thought about leaving this relationship many times every day over the past week,” you confessed. His eyes flicked to meet yours, aggravation subsiding slightly, giving way to a mixture of concern and piqued interest. “Why am I still here? …Because that would involve leaving you. I don’t like where our relationship is right now, but I want you. I can’t be the perfect housewife to you the way your board director’s wives are. I can’t be that textbook wife while running my own conglomerate. I can’t dress to represent you and I can’t act ten years older than I am to match you.”

Seto reserved himself to quietly listening with a blankly composed countenance. “But I need to be all those things don’t I – because I can’t just be your wife, I have to be Seto Kaiba’s wife, the wife of the most powerful man in Japan. It’s just ridiculous that you picked a twenty one year old to fill the job. I ask myself who I’m living for. I wonder who I am. I’m too good to lose my identity because I got married, even if it is to you. Don’t take a perfectly good woman and make her lose her colour. I’m too good to never be good enough for you. This industry tells me that every day… that I’m too fat, too starved, too modest, too provocative,” you spoke as if there was a bitterness on your tongue. “You tell me to look after my health, but what was the last time you asked me if I’ve eaten? I myself don’t remember the answer to that question. Before dinner, I don’t remember. I’ve been running around on lo-cal protein shakes because I’ve been told I just can’t afford anything else. All you and I seem to have is money,” you laughed cynically, “but I can’t afford anything. The time – your time, the calories, the rest, the peace of mind it’s all too expensive – doesn’t that just bite?”

“All of that should have been secondary to your health,” he interjected stoically.

“Do you realize how this industry works? Do you hear what I tell you?” You scoffed, “of course had you listened when I told you I was tired – had your work been secondary to my health, we wouldn’t be here right now. I told you I couldn’t see straight and you told me to behave myself. I ruptured a blood vessel and you – you told me to wait an hour or two. I bend over backwards for you Seto!” you declared hysterically, pitch spiking. “You tell me to get on my knees, I do it, you tell me to give you head, I do it – do you realize how uncomfortable I felt in that setting? You tell me to open my legs – I had hardly slept nine hours over the past week, that’s less than two hours a
night, but I let you have it because you were my husband and I felt I owed it to you.” You drew in a deep breath, settling your erratic heartbeat, voice dropping to a lower register, “Now my blood has run dry catering to you, and you tell me it’s my fault? Do you navigate through life without a conscience?”

He watched you with an eerily composed expression.

“I’ll handle the paperwork to take you home,” he declared plainly, before turning on his heel and disappearing past the sliding door.

You were left seething, caught in a maddening state between incensed and nonplussed.

…

The tightness in your chest continued to be suffocating. You heard the door slide open, and purposeful footsteps approach you. You were turned on your side, facing the opposite wall.

“Are you asleep?” you heard Seto’s voice behind you by the bedside.

A heavy sigh which veiled tears left your lips.

“Do you want me to carry you?” he asked. You offered him your silence. “Fine,” he grit his teeth, before slipping his hands under you to carry you.

…

The ride home in the limo was silent, awkward, and to some degree sickening. You sat apart from each other.

Neither he nor you brought up your words, favouring to postpone the inevitable discussion to a later time, indefinitely, or at least so you interpreted the silence.

Preparing for bed, he had made it obvious that he was keeping a watchful on eye on you, though he maintained his silent composure.

As you buried yourself under the covers, turned away from him on your side, you felt his arm weigh over your waist, hand clutching your stomach.

“Don’t touch me,” you hissed, shooting him a glare over your shoulder. His arm remained unmoving and you hardly had the energy to actively resist him.

…

Waking up, Seto was laying on his side watching over you, slightly raising himself on his elbow, the back of his hand resting against his head. Moonlight poured over from the large windows behind him. You felt fingers combing through your hair.

You weren’t sure what had roused you; in fact, you couldn’t be very sure of a great number of things; the memories of last night escaping you.

Extending your arms, you wrapped them around him, drawing yourself closer to his chest. You couldn’t recall the last time you had slept in the same bed as your husband, especially back in the mansion.

“I hope you aren’t considering a divorce from me with any seriousness,” he declared, a solemnness plaguing his tone.
It took a moment for his words to make sense to you, the events of last night reassembling slowly in your mind. Heaviness returned to your heart at the recollection.

“I said what I said in a moment where I was very disappointed with you. I’m still very disappointed in you. I meant what I said.”

“I see.”

His fingers continued to move against your hair. He drew in a deep, laboured breath.

“Am I considering a divorce from you? No, but our lives will always be this stressful and we can’t neglect everything else each time. I can’t be a perfect wife to you either.”

“Why did you hold it in?” he questioned.

“I didn’t, you refused to listen.”

“I took you for granted,” he admitted after a few moments. “You’re a remarkable woman, and I admire you. I don’t think there’s anyone else that could do what you do, and there’s certainly no other woman who could replace you as my wife,” he asserted. “I won’t ask anything of you. You’ve proven you can live up to everything I said I wanted you to be and I realize now that’s not the woman I wanted,” he admitted, draping the hand in your hair over your waist, folding his other hand under you, wrapping it around your shoulders. “Dress however you want, conduct yourself as you please, you’ve made your point. I liked you better as yourself.”

“That’s it? That’s your apology?”

Ideally, you should have forgiven him, asked him to be a good husband, and moved on, but you weren’t a saint. You loved him, but you weren’t a saint.

“What is it that you want?”

You wanted to give him as much as you had received, but an eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind, you reminded yourself.

“Spoil me,” you asked of him instead.

“What?” he questioned, his undertone reading irritation.

“Give me your time. Take me out for dinner, take me shopping, take me to the movies, take me on a drive somewhere. This may sound conceited, and I hope in a way it does. I realize you’re my husband, but act like my boyfriend, actually pursue me. Actually make me feel you love me and appreciate me.”

“You’re asking for a lot,” he growled.

“You put me through a lot,” you declared firmly. “I hope I’m worth this much to you at the very least.”

“Fine,” he agreed reluctantly, “but I have a condition.”

“What?”

“Start paying better attention to your health.”

“Must everything be a business deal to you?”
“I’m still looking out for you,” he insisted.

“Is that a yes?”

“Are you threatening me with the alternative of divorce?” Seto asked, voice dropping a register.

“Someone once told me that when something that’s important enough is broken, we should try to fix it. This is me trying to fix it.”

“Fine, when the game launch is over, I’ll try to act more like a – your boyfriend,” he stated uncertainly, his tone twisting uncomfortably, “that sounds ridiculous. You realize that don’t you?”

Still rested against his chest, you moved your head up to meet his eyes. They were beautiful pools of sapphire in the dim light.

“I think it sounds romantic.”

“That’s synonymous for ridiculous,” he maintained, a faint smirk on his lips.

“I want to know, what possessed you, looking at me, the literal antithesis of you, at least as far as you could tell, what made you think, that’s the woman I want to spend the rest of my life with?”

“I don’t think I was thinking entirely. I seem to make a lot of decisions involving you without thinking as I normally do.” He paused for a long moment. “Tell me honestly, I realize you’re too young for me to ask this of you, but have you with any seriousness considered having children. Not for the sake of obligation.”

“Honestly, no, never more than as an obligation. In my defense, I didn’t see myself married at twenty one, children were…”

“I understand.”

“Do you want children?”

“I do,” Seto firmly declared. “At least one, more if you can handle it, if it can be helped.”

“Do you have a preference?”

“What?”

“Do you want a son or a daughter?”

He laughed at the question. You couldn’t be sure what had been so amusing.

“I don’t have a preference, no.” Silence fell again for another long moment. “Your work, it’s not sustainable,” he changed gears without warning. “You’re going to crash before you reach my age, and I worry for your health mentally, especially if you do fall pregnant. It’s going to be difficult looking like you do now after we have children. I want to know how you feel about your body, not what the industry thinks.”

“Well for one, I don’t feel comfortable talking about my body image with my husband.”

“Why is that?” he questioned gruffly, possibly offended.

“Well, I mean…I guess I don’t – I mean I’m comfortable the way I am – but I mean next to you – you’re you…” you trailed off your string of stuttering, unable to find the words.
“I’m what?” he pressed.

“You’re – buff – I don’t know,” you spoke quietly against his shirt, colour rushing to your face. “You’re fit and I already feel like I don’t measure up. I can’t even imagine how I’ll feel being with you after having children.”

“If you don’t measure up, I don’t see who would,” he dismissed without sparing a second thought. “Knowing you, me telling you otherwise won’t fix anything, but my attraction to you isn’t purely physical. Your stretch marks,” you literally cringed at his sharp tone “- all the flaws you’re tearing yourself apart about doesn’t bother me. You won’t look that way forever; your health is the only factor concerning me. Start with how you see yourself, and then what the industry has to say won’t affect you as deeply. External appearance is fleeting and frivolous, your health you live with.”

“You really do sound like you care when you try,” you admitted quietly, “I needed to hear that, thank you.”

“I care all the time. You just don’t like how I do it,” he countered in a gruff tone of voice, holding you closer. “It’s disappointing,” he noted another while later, “that you of all people feel this insecure while being recognized by an entire nation for how you look. You owe yourself better.”

At the conclusion of the week, the following week – the week of the game launch - passed in a flurry of press conferences and corporate dinners.

Seto had made a point to himself to be more attentive towards you despite the chaos, and you were grateful. He had grown to be more forthcoming and attempted whenever the opportunity afforded itself to him to thank you. He had been so attentive in fact, that his behaviour had earned a few comments – always to the side of course, though you had been diligent in being perceptive of it all - from his directors of how the young CEO was more concerned about his wife than the performance of the game in the market. From your professional perspective however, you did not believe that his thoughtfulness towards you had weakened his work ethic or hindered his capabilities.

You held your own press conference that week, officially announcing that Kodama had formally discontinued and disposed of the AI project as it was felt the project was not progressing in a direction that was aligned with the company’s vision and identity. You obviously did not expect your conspirators to believe you, despite it being the reality of the situation, and expected every last bit of backlash you received from the technological community and other fanatics of the field. You realized the timing wasn’t ideal considering Kaiba Corp.’s game launch, but it had been done upon your husband’s insistence. Seto was partially dragged into the drama, some pointing fingers at him for not persuading you against it as many assumed he would be one to strongly champion it. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the rough seas Kodama was currently navigating through consequently offered Kaiba Corp. the sole spotlight, strengthening their position as the industry leader.

Waking up the Monday morning following all the insanity, knowing you didn’t have to share your husband with his company was utterly elating. You could care less about the hot water your company was currently paddling in.

Your head was nestled against the crook of his neck. Waking up next to him always afforded you the sensation of butterflies in the pit of your stomach. His body felt warm against the cold air blowing from the air conditioner. Sometime during the night, you had found him on your side of the bed. Currently on the verge of being pushed off the edge; his left hand curved under you, his
right folded over his closed eyes, though you could tell he was awake.

Pulling yourself up, a smile you couldn’t help tugging at your lips, he began to remove his arm away from his eyes at your stirring, as you leaned over him. You didn’t allow him the chance to react as you pressed your lips against his slightly parted ones. His lips felt warm, and soft, though slightly chapped. He released a throaty laugh which caught beyond your parted lips. He began to say something, but his words were lost against your mouth, as you rolled your lips over his more fervently, your fingertips wrapping light around his right arm that had fallen by his side.

For a moment, he remained perfectly still, and his lack of responsiveness caused you to falter, eyes opening to see why he refused to return your affection. Your eyes opened to see his brilliant blue ones staring back at you, a glint of mischief playing in them. You pulled away, eyes darting between his, heartbeat accelerating in trepidation.

His lips stretched into a smirk abruptly, pulling you back down to meet his lips, before flipping you on your back, clambering over you, lips never leaving yours, his teeth bit down against the inside of your bottom lip as he did. Your hands knotted in his hair.

“You want to do this first thing in the morning?” he questioned as if to threaten you, pulling away; his deep morning voice a husky which bordered on raspy, sending a shudder through to your nerve endings. “You should know what making that face gets you.”

“I missed you,” you simply offered.

“You’ve been with me this whole weekend,” he countered bluntly.

“Not like this,” you pointed out, fingers curling; hands balling into fists around his shirt, pulling him down towards you, demanding his lips against yours. Your heart palpitated at the connection. He kissed you back deeply with a certain hunger. Heady sensations overcoming you, you wriggled under him, asking for more. He responded with a groan, low in his throat.

His skin against yours, his musk was much more prominent. He always smelt good, it was intoxicating.

You wanted more. Your fingers reached for the buttons of his shirt, and his hands followed. You felt his lips stretching into a smirk against yours as he stopped you.

“I still need to go to work,” he disputed, “and if you do this, I don’t think I would want to leave you.”

His voice, his hot breath against your ears, him refusing you was torment.

He pulled away completely, sitting against the headboard.

“Pass me my phone,” he requested, motioning towards the nightstand on his side of the bed.

“You have time to check your phone but not to let me have you?” you inquired in irritation, reaching for his phone. Handing it to him, you leaned against him as he flipped through his emails.

“I’m checking my emails here instead of in the car or at the office so I can stay with you longer,” he flatly explained.

Your train of thought had derailed somewhere and wandered away from your husband’s screen because the next it distractedly fell over it, you noticed he was reading an article, the picture piquing your interest.
You leaned over his arm, placing your hands on his forearm, and he lifted his arm away, wrapping it around you, holding the screen in front of the both of you.

The article was littered with pictures of the two of you over the past week and weekend, what little excerpt you had managed to scan over commending you, reading something along the lines of how you had stood by your fiancé and supported his corporation’s launch. Seto flicked through a few other articles which read to a similar effect, all noting how suitable the two of you appeared standing next to each other – though personally you still couldn’t overlook the jarring height difference even with the ridiculously tall heels you had subjected yourself to wear – equally capable and appearing genuinely content - possibly even in love - with each other.

“Finally,” you sighed laying your head against his neck, “something positive about our relationship.”

He hummed conveying his contentment.

…

Seto had urged you to keep your gun with you at all times as you left the house that morning, and despite an entire forty-five minutes of you grating on his nerves in the car to tell you why he had felt the need to specifically remind you that day, he wouldn’t relent, vaguely repeating the same response of how he would be around you less than he had been the past weeks.

His unexplained and rather sudden request had left you so unsettled that you felt the need to wear the necklace Seto had given you. You couldn’t be certain if he had noticed the carved stone dragon nestled between your collarbones, because if he had, he hadn’t made any remarks or gestures acknowledging it.

Your husband dropped you off at your first schedule.

“I’m coming home early today,” he informed you as you stepped out of the car, “would you like to go out for dinner?”

“Sure,” you answered mildly surprised by the offer. “When do you plan to come home?”

“Six, maybe seven.”

“Can’t you do earlier than that?” you questioned, pushing your luck.

“When do you want me to come home?” he entertained your request, much to your disbelief again.

“Earlier the better,” you responded vaguely, leaning back over to kiss him on the cheek, returning your surprise as you left the car.

The shoot was a wedding inspired editorial for High Cut magazine and it was scheduled to occupy over half your day.

Bowing to all the staff on your way inside, your eyes met with the petite woman you had been searching for.

“Good morning,” the shoot director who introduced herself as Mina greeted you as you entered the rustic, French ballroom inspired studio; walls sanded a clean white. You returned her welcome, politely offering a bow.
“That chandelier is the size of my car,” you remarked in awe of the epic three-tiered chandelier suspended specially for the shoot from the high ceiling. Your words had not been an exaggeration, the light fixture, surrounded by many smaller replicas like it, was in fact just that extravagant, with thousands upon thousands of strings of finely polished crystals stretching away from the center, all glowing a brilliant amber.

“It is rather large, isn’t it?” the shoot director laughed in agreement, guiding you towards the dressing rooms to introduce you to the team. “We needed something that could hold its own against you and the massive couture dresses in the shoot.”

It would be difficult to conceal a gun on your person under the many wedding dresses you were required to change into during the course of the shoot, so you were forced to leave your gun hidden in your purse. For the sake of false comfort, you elected to hold on to the necklace during the shoot.

Following the third dress change, you were fumbling with your necklace as you walked back to stand in front of the cameras, under the chandeliers, clumsily attempting to thrust the frustratingly slippery chain into the pocket of your dress, when your shoulder accidentally met with an unsuspecting staffer’s. You both stumbled in opposite directions, your necklace slipping from your fingers, the pendant scraping against the stone as it slid across the floor past the cameras.

Apologizing, you launched yourself after the necklace. Fingers wrapping around the metal chain, retrieving the necklace from under one of the poised cameras, you stood up, your attention funnelling towards the peculiar ringing sound which reverberated with a quiet sharpness through the vast hall. The sound was so fine in fact that none of the production team members seemed to have heard it.

Twisting around, carrying the heavy skirt of your Dolce and Gabbana dress as you did, your eyes narrowed in on the oddly swinging chandelier you had been standing under moments before. You were quite certain that such a weighty light fixture should not be swaying so lightly was it securely suspended. Your eyes fell in petrification over the staff member you had collided with earlier, who was still under the chandelier, searching the dusty floor blindly for something unknown to you on her hands and knees.

Had your necklace not slipped away from you, you would have been under that loose chandelier in that moment. Instead, now that cursed fate had befallen someone else.

Without sparing a second thought, you made a mad dash in your trained dress towards the girl.

“We need to get out from under the chandelier,” you urged her, bending over and tugging on her arm, “something’s not right.”

“My contact, I can’t see without my contact,” she refused.

“What are you going to do? Pick it up off the dusty floor and put it in your eye?” you inquired sharply, “the chandelier doesn’t look very secure, we need to move, now.”

She wouldn’t be moved, persistently scouring the floor.

A nerve grating snapping sound echoed through the room for a long moment and the production team erupted into a flurry of gasps and a frenzy of shouting, pointing above you. The chandelier was enormous; you couldn’t possibly outrun it if it indeed did drop while you were standing under
Hooking an arm around the stubborn young woman, you gripped the skirt of your dress with your other arm, dragging her dead weight away from under the falling death trap. You wouldn’t dare look up.

Throwing her forward after forcefully hauling her a fair distance, your other hand reached down to your skirt to lift it up in an attempt to help your faltering feet which irritatingly tangled in the fabric of the dress. You wouldn’t make it another two steps, the chandelier coming crashing down as you had predicted; the metal detailing of a middle tier snaring the train of your dress, violently drawing you backwards under its weight. Your knees folded. The crystal centerpiece sending shockwaves through the air as it made impact with the floor.

The jeweled crown poised on your head rolled away.

The last you recalled, you lifted your head to witness another chandelier above you coming lose, hurling towards the ground directly above you.

…

Your consciousness afforded you sight of an empty hospital room, the familiar beeping to your left, the dull ache of a needle against the back of your hand, the unsettling odour of antiseptic.

Vaguely recalling how you had dove as far your ensnared skirt had allowed, you wondered how you had lost consciousness.

You found yourself being lulled back to sleep by the steady puffs of the humidifier, humming somewhere in a corner. You deduced that there was likely Morphine in your IV drip.

Amid your delirious state resulting from your intoxication, the sound of the wooden door grating against the metal rail sounded much more distant than it was. Your distorted vision was lagging, wrapping everything in a white haze, offering you only blurred images of the figure in the doctor’s coat and blue surgical mask. You faintly registered a surgical cap tied over his dark hair.

Your skin prickled for a reason beyond you. Your heavy lids must have appeared closed, because he glanced over you, eyes glossing over yours without holding your gaze.

He produced a syringe filled with a clear gold liquid, and your dulled mind immediately flushed with panic.

You discreetly watched him inserting the syringe into your IV drip. His eyes flicked towards you and you instantly forced them closed.

You couldn’t be certain how much more time had passed before you cautiously opened your eyes at the absence of the sound of the door opening and closing again.

Your vision slightly less impaired, though your body continued to weigh heavily, you found the man dressed in the medical scrubs sitting across from the foot of your bed on the chaise lounge. He seemed to have noticed, traversing the distance to your bedside.

He pulled down his mask, revealing his face to you, and your insides twisted in recognition. He held a gun against your temple.

“Ask your husband to call off the prosecutors, have them withdraw the arrest warrant. You think your father won’t be affected by this?”
You recognized him, but you were at a complete loss as to what he meant by asking Seto to call off the prosecutors. Had Seto gone ahead and requested an investigation without informing you?

As for his second statement, your father had managed a previous cabinet’s defense portfolio, though you couldn’t have begun to consider the possibility of him being a potential bidder. You watched Wakamura’s rugged face twist with a certain sense of satisfaction as he observed your expression which had most likely contorted at the notion.

You willed your mind to compose yourself.

“You’re pulling out your ace. People don’t do that unless they’re desperate,” you asserted boldly.
“What did you put in my IV?”

“I can’t say. Ask your husband, Kaiba to sweep this storm he’s creating under the rug, and I’ll give you the antidote,” Wakamura bargained.

“No thanks,” you declined smiling defiantly, in spite of the situation – and your better judgement. “My husband isn’t easily convinced. I think I’ll take my chances with my immune system.”

“You think your name won’t be tainted by this if I reveal your father’s name amongst people who made offers?” he blackmailed.

“That’s your trump card isn’t it? I think you fail to realize that my last name is more closely associated with the Kaibas than my father now. Your so called threat doesn’t scare me. Don’t underestimate how powerful a man my husband is, or how powerful I am for that matter. Put that weak blackmail strategy away and take a seat with everyone else trying to steal my corporation from me,” you growled. “I don’t have time to sympathise with everyone’s sob story. Don’t allow yourself the dishonour of being rejected by two generations of my family.”

He motioned to retort when he phone screen lit up. He hesitated for a moment, eyes flickering over the text that had appeared.

“You have twenty-four hours before the drug reaches your organs,” he suddenly declared with a sense of urgency. “Decide wisely.”

And with that, he tucked his gun under his robe and concealing his face behind the mask again, disappeared with haste behind the door.

You were much too sedated to follow after him or physically react.

Where the hell were the snipers? Where was your security?

Where was your husband?
Mind weighed with sedation, thoughts impaired by the resulting intoxication, you couldn’t be certain how much time passed as you drifted in and out of sleep. The third time you were called to consciousness, it was again by the wooden door scraping against metal.

Opening your eyes, you were blinded by the white light pouring in.

Your eyes afforded you a distorted image of a tall figure approaching. They were wearing a grey suit you registered.

You closed your eyes to blink, or so you had thought, but a long moment must have passed because you suddenly found yourself in an embrace, a pair of arms wrapping around you before you had the chance to open your eyes. You recognized that scent.

“My guards lost sight of Wakamura,” a voice spoke against your ear, “I was in a meeting, I didn’t get the message. I found out you were in the hospital after the meeting. Your security detail was in a different wing of the hospital from where I was tracking you, I thought the worst,” he spoke, panting breathlessly.

His words didn’t make much sense to you as your mind dissolved back into darkness.

You couldn’t even stay awake to hold a conversation and this made you wonder how coherent your words to Wakamura had been, how much clarity were they actually delivered with?

When your consciousness came to again, it was dark outside. Your husband was sitting in a chair by your bedside, laptop occupying his attention.

“Wakamura was here,” were the first words your mind allowed you to speak. They had been the words on the tip of your tongue as you drifted in and out of reality.

His eyes flicked up to you like darts against a target.

“What did you say?”

“Wakamura,” you repeated, “he was here –”

Either your reaction, or speed of perception were severely lagging, or your husband’s cell phone materialised in his hand out of thin air.

“I want the hospital on lockdown,” he ordered whoever, “no one gets in or out until I say so, is that understood?”

“No Seto – listen to me,” you urged in a voice more strained than you had anticipated. The tone scraped at the side of your throat. “He’s gone, long gone; he was here much before you.”

He watched you for a moment.

“I’m sorry.”

Did he just apologize?
He was never one to apologize, not with those particular words. It sounded strange, almost alien leaving his tongue. The words clashed with his tone. You wanted to acknowledge his sincerity, and yet you knew well that he wouldn’t want you drawing unnecessary attention to it.

“He… put something in my IV. Said something about asking you to call off the prosecutors and I don’t know…arrest warrant, or the poison reaching my organs within twenty four hours –”

“He did what?” He interrupted you in alarm, his eyes widening for a split-second before they narrowed to slits. His voice reached a terrifying pitch momentarily, then immediately dropped to a low, spine chilling register. “You’re telling me this now?”

He launched forward towards you, laptop discarded on to the nightstand.

“Calm down,” you asked of him in a weak tone, attempting to pull yourself up.

“How can I be calm,” he questioned, enraged in a way that was beyond the words you knew how to describe with, “you’ve been here for almost eight hours without - Who knows what that bastard put in your IV.”

“Seto, wait, let me finish,” you urged him, unsteadily throwing your blanket away from you as you wrestled against his arm. “I saw him pulling out the syringe, I disconnected the tube,” you explained, motioning your head towards the sodden sheets next to you where the severed tube leading down from the saline bag had leaked. “I’m fine,” you assured him, offering a worn smile.

“How can you be sure it didn’t reach your system?” he questioned.

“I’m not stupid, I disconnected it before the syringe was anywhere near the drip. Though,” you paused, wincing, hand travelling to the back of your head, “without the morphine or whatever was in that drip, my head’s killing me.”

“Don’t do that!” he barked, shaking you slightly by the shoulders before pulling you into an embrace. “I still want a blood test done,” he added after another moment of contemplation. You nodded your head faintly at his request.

“How did I pass out, do you know?” you asked as he held you.

“I was told the back of your head fell against the metal railing of a chandelier. The cables were intentionally cut, if you didn’t already figure.”

“I see. Take me home,” you told him, sick of habitually spending your time in hospital rooms.

“They need to monitor your condition overnight,” he rejected.

“I want to go home, take me home,” you whined, “I’ll feel better sleeping in the same bed as you.”

“Is the bed uncomfortable?” he inquired, pulling away slightly to look down at you.

“No,” you sighed, “You really have no sense.”

“I’m going to dismiss that as the pain medication talking,” he stated roughly. “We are staying here.”

“I want to go home,” you persisted stubbornly thrashing, “I’m sick of these sickly looking walls.”

“Stop acting like the child you are,” he ordered pulling away, sitting back in his chair.
You slid back into the sheets, tactically avoiding the cold, drenched spot, which threateningly drew closer and closer to you as it spread through the sheets.

Silence endured for a long moment before a thought brought with it a wave of panic.

“My necklace – the - the one with the dragon,” you stammered, “Was it with my things? I couldn’t have lost it,” you tripped over your words in distress.

Your husband reached into the pocket of his trousers, expressionlessly lifting his fisted hand level with his head, before opening it, the chain of the aforementioned necklace strung through his fingers, the pendant tumbling down, bouncing slightly as it fell, hanging from his fingers.

Relief washed through your nerves. It was eerie in a way remembering, how that necklace had slid across the floor in that exact moment, as if to lead you away from the falling chandelier. In a way, you could call it a lucky charm. Apparently even such charms could only warn you of impending danger, not save you from it.

Shortly after, a blood test was taken from you, the sheets changed, and a new IV tube attached to the needle in your hand. You were advised that despite your concussion, you had not been inflicted any serious trauma to the brain or spinal cord, and while there had been a lot of glass where you had collapsed, the dress had shielded you from the most of it. Your palms were slit in a few places and there was a light gash across the back of your right hand, though nothing serious enough to warrant stitches.

“I was looking forward to dinner,” you told Seto once the two of you were alone again, your hand reaching over to his.

“Don’t be senseless,” he growled, his thumb stroking your hand absentmindedly, “You’re lucky to be alive. Do you realize how narrowly you missed that crash?”

His tone was harsh.

“I wasn’t speaking relatively. I didn’t die, and being alive is great, but that doesn’t change the fact that I was still looking forward to it.”

“How childlike,” he declared; a certain animosity towards how you were regarding the situation, “Your tests are done; you won’t need surgery, so you can eat, what do you want?” He paused for a second before pointedly adding, “Not pizza.”

“Why not?”

“That’s not food.”

“It is too, I’d like to hear you definition of food. I wasn’t going to ask for that anyway,” you spoke with a defiant tone to your words, “I want fried chicken and sushi.”

“That’s such a nonsensical combination,” he disputed.

“Did I ask for your opinion?”

“Are you sure you’re not pregnant?” he questioned sarcastically.
“Do you not realize how pregnancy works?” you returned his tone, genuinely piqued to a certain degree. “I’m on birth control if you must know - you know - since you’re so adamant about not using – never mind,” you sighed, “Just get me food!”

“I’m perfectly aware,” he snapped, “And I don’t see the point in using two contraceptives. It’s all probability anyway.”

His argument made no sense and you were sure he knew, though before you could point out, he was already on his phone.

…

“You’re not eating,” he remarked, as you turned your sushi roll over again absentmindedly in soy sauce. Bringing the piece to your mouth, you cringed at the overpowering saltiness as it numbed your palate.

You heard Seto sighing disapprovingly.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” you asked as you composed yourself, your critical faculties slowly returning to you. “…That you found and turned over evidence to the prosecution. I would have kept a better guard you know, instead of that vague warning to keep a gun.”

“I realize that now,” he reflected your solemn tone, “You were so overwhelmed last week that I thought it would be better to keep you away from it all. I realize now that it was flawed thinking,” he admitted.

“Did you see who… made offers to him?” you inquired hesitantly.

“From foreign governments?” he sought to clarify.

“Yes.”

“Why do you ask?”

“My father… Was my… father on that list?” you questioned apprehensively.

“Not that I recall, why?”

“Because asking me to tell you to call off the case, Wakamura asked me if I thought I would be safe if it was revealed that my father’s name was on the list of potential bidders.”

“You’re a Kaiba, your name is affiliated with mine, that shouldn’t affect you in the slightest,” Seto dismissed without a moment of consideration.

“That’s what I said,” you agreed slowly, “but, I still worry about it. We can’t sit here and pretend that it won’t have some effect on my reputation.”

“Don’t, I’ll take care of it – if it comes to that,” he reassured, his voice resonating deeply. “That much is child’s play.”

“Thank you,” you began to say.

“It’s hardly something –”

“For being my husband,” you corrected him, an unreadable expression dawning on his features.
“That being said,” he continued after a while, “I think it’s best we wipe both our boards clean of all the moles before they’re drawn into the controversy and the media draws the lines back to us. Being embroiled in treason is the last thing either of our corporations need. Your image especially couldn’t handle it. Even with my power it won’t be easy to cover up, in fact, both our influence couldn’t stand against something so reprehensible.” He continued again after a moment’s thought. “Harada was dismissed earlier today.”

It was crucial that you both waited till the axe was dropped on Wakamura before removing any of his chess pieces from either of your boards, so as to not allow him the advantage of knowing your intentions.

“I see. I also already have my internal auditing department compiling evidence against Uchimura, my Human Resources director for misconduct involving conflicts of interest. I rather not have him leave the organization for anything directly relating to the treason scheme.” He released a low hum in agreement. “I’ll set the day for his dismissal hearing the day after.” You paused for a moment. “What about Kaoru?”

“Who?”

“Hidehira, Kaoru.”

“You’re on a first name basis with him now?” your husband grimaced, raising an eyebrow, obviously displeased.

“Seto,” you sighed sternly.

“What about him?” he grit his teeth.

“I’ve noticed on my visits that he’s awfully close with Harada, or was,” you noted.

“Kaoru is a moron,” Seto asserted confidently, “that fool isn’t capable of treason. As much as it would give me great pleasure to see him indicted of it, he’s more likely a pawn. Besides, I had a background check done on him through a private investigator and he came back clean. You also found no evidence of his involvement. They just used him because of his interest towards you.”

“You think he was genuinely interested in me?” you questioned, mildly intrigued.

“Why do you care?” Seto spat.

“I don’t, not really; I just never entertained his advances with any sincerity.”

“And now you will consider his advances more seriously?” your husband narrowed his eyes.

“Would you stop that? I have no interest in the man if that’s what you’re insinuating. If I did, I would have left you by now so stop it, it’s insulting,” you bit back.

You had expected a series of very strong words to leave your husband’s mouth, but he leaned away, seemingly indifferent.

“What are you thinking about?” you questioned a little while after dinner, observing as your
husband appeared deep in thought, his blue eyes fixated on a randomly assigned spot on the distant wall, his fingers laced under his chin as he sat in his chair.

“What?”

“I asked you what you were thinking about,” you repeated.

“About how fortunate it is that my wife isn’t stupid,” he extended in explanation.

“And this is suddenly relevant because…?”

“Had you not ripped out your IV, this would be a very different situation right now as I’m sure you can imagine.”

“Oh, that.”

“Give yourself more credit,” he insisted, “you were heavily drugged, I saw your dosage, and yet you were sharp enough to be proactive.”

“I should have called security.”

“Don’t push yourself,” he dismissed, retrieving his laptop from the nightstand.

As late eleven approached, you turned over in boredom, watching your husband type unrelentingly on his laptop; never once shifting from the stiff attitude he had settled himself into hours ago.

“You said you would come home early today,” you questioned, “were you planning to bring all this work home?”

“I left the office at two in the afternoon for you,” he stated flatly, eyes never distracting from the screen.

“Right, I’m sorry.”

You would have asked that he go home, had the situation not been what it was.

“Get some sleep,” he ordered, eyes flickering up to you.

“I can’t seem to.”

“You have ten milligrams of morphine being put in your system, how are you not able to sleep?” he asked, mildly irritated.

“Can you give me a hug? Or am I distracting you?”

“You are,” he agreed with your last question, though in spite of his words, he placed his laptop on the table by your beside, standing up. “Try to get some sleep,” he advised, wrapping his arms around you as you pulled yourself up to sit.

A short knock followed by the door sliding open to reveal a nurse led Seto to draw himself away from you.

She bowed politely towards Seto before turning to you with a beaming smile.
“Good news,” she announced, “your blood test came back from our lab without issue. You should be allowed to get discharged by tomorrow morning if there aren’t any complications.”

“Thank you,” you offered, and she left shortly after inquiring whether there was anything else you needed.

You couldn’t recount the events of the rest of the night, the morphine obscuring and eventually claiming altogether conscious thought.

As Seto took care of your discharge paperwork the next morning, you couldn’t help but feel apologetic towards him for how you had found him that morning waking up; sitting straight up against the chair, arms crossed, eyes shut tightly, his expression conveying obvious discomfort as he slept.

…”

“I’m going to break a record at this rate,” you mumbled contemplatively as you flicked through different search engines and articles, “for making the front page of so many papers in one morning. I pushed someone three feet; did anyone ask them to make me superwoman?”

“You look displeased,” Seto observed from the driver’s seat, his fringe looking displaced and dishevelled.

“Not exactly. I just think they're blowing it out of proportion painting me some sort of hero. Idol worship is insane.”

“That will help overshadow the bad press Kodama is currently receiving,” he pointed out in a matter-of-fact tone.

“That bad press will blow over once the treason plot takes the media by storm and they realize why we destroyed the technology.”

“Are you intending to allow that to be revealed?” Seto questioned combing his fingers through his hair in irritation as you reached a stop light.

“Transparency will do the least damage. Hiding something that will ultimately be revealed will do more damage in the long run.”

He chose not to respond, though it was obvious the gears of his mind were turning.

…”

“I never understand how you park so smoothly in this jungle of cars,” you remarked as your husband pulled in to the narrow space perfectly, between two red sports cars – at least they loosely resembled cars. “Some of these cars don’t even look like they’re from this century or dimension to be honest.” You were speaking mostly to yourself.

That piqued his attention quite effectively.

“What?”

Don’t get so offended, good lord.

“No it’s just that most of these cars look like things you would see in sci-fi movies or something. I’ve also never seen you drive any of them.”
That answer seemed to appease him, perhaps even stroke his ego.

“You don’t care for cars, do you?” he questioned smirking, drawing back the gear.

“I couldn’t tell you the difference between a black Porsche and black Lamborghini without looking at the insignia and I can’t drive a stick shift to save my life,” you admitted. You watched his expression twist with disdain. “Speaking of cars though, when do I get to move in mine?”

“I’ll look into it. How many do you own?”

“I’ll have someone count and let you know.”

For someone who doesn’t care for cars and alcohol, you certainly had ridiculous collections of both.

He hummed gutturally in agreement.

“You’re coming to work with me,” he abruptly declared, “I fired your security detail after yesterday –”

“You did what?”

You understood his reasoning to a certain extent, your security guards had been deceived – likely by Wakamura’s men – into believing that you had been taken to the radiography wing for testing while you were brought back to your room, creating the needed diversion and opening for Wakamura himself to slip in. That being considered, you still couldn’t call the decision anything besides rash.

“As I was saying, it would be better for you to stay by my side until this blows over.”

“That could be months! Legal proceedings take months, sometimes years Seto, you know that. I have a company to run. I don’t have time to idle in your office,” you contested.

“Once they are apprehended and under arrest, they won’t be a threat. Once they’re in the legal system, one word from me and they are as good as dead. This of course could have been handled much differently and a great deal faster, had you not been so morally bound,” he stated darkly. The aura surrounding him as he said those words was blood curdling.

“Are you insinuating you would have taken care of them the way you did – people in your past,” you faltered, “had it not been for me?”

“Yes,” he admitted without reservation. “I’m going through the pain of sticking to the law because of you,” he added with evident discontentment.

“What would you have done,” you questioned lifelessly, almost afraid to learn, “Would you have run their conglomerate into bankruptcy and buried their bodies?”

His scoff bordered on being a cynical laugh which he smothered in the last moment.

“No one takes care of things that way, and how I take care of business I don’t need you concerning yourself with,” he asserted. “If even for a moment I feel the prosecution is not handling the matter satisfactorily, I will still not hesitate changing my means, in spite of your sentiments.”

There was that obscurity which made your blood flow backwards in your veins again.

You had never fathomed a businessman could inspire this deep a fear in you.
“You’re obviously more than I can handle,” you conceded. “You’re starting to sound like a mob boss.”

“There’s a reason I’m the most powerful man in this country and not the men of the syndicates I associate with.”

This was him affirming that all options were still on the table wasn’t it? You began to wonder if the prosecutor’s investigation was a charade, a mere front he had elaborately constructed to falsely console you.
What happened with this chapter was basically what happened to the producers of the Dark Side of Dimensions movie. It was initially only supposed to have Seto – and the reader in this case – then I added the actual plot. It got ridiculously long, I think 12000 words and so I decided that the specifics of the prosecutor’s investigation were unnecessary and there went over 6000 words. This story is already well over 200,000 words, I think we’re good. So anyway, I do apologize if some places seem disconnected or rushed, I just…ha yeah… I had to make it fit a sensible length and just want this story behind me before September really kicks into overdrive, lol no I kid.

Bonus points if you guess which group sings this Kpop song.

Enjoy!

Clasping your bra, you were reaching for your black lace dress when you heard the shower stop running. Allowing the dress to fall over the black blazer laid over the foot of the bed, you walked into the bathroom to find Seto standing facing away from the door as he dried his hair, a towel wrapped over his lower half.

Walking up behind him, you wrapped your arms around his waist, biting your lip painted a deep red nervously as you rested your cheek against his back.

His arm dropped to his side, clutching the towel he had been moving against his hair.

“Do it through the judicial process,” you urged, “I’ll do anything for you to do it legally, regardless of how long it may take.”

For a moment he stood perfectly still. Then he sighed deeply. He loosened your hands, turning to face you, your arms now clasped around his back.

“What is that you can give me?” he husked in a whisper, tilting your chin to meet his eyes, fingers tucking your hair behind your ear.

Your gaze fell to the floor.

Your wealth was useless to him, your fame matched, your influence you were starting to learn he surpassed, your affections and body he already had. He knew you wouldn’t leave his side regardless of what he did.

He released a guttural laugh, pulling you flush against his exposed chest. He rested his head over your crown.

“Don’t try to play the hero.”

“You really know how to render someone powerless.”

“As if you didn’t already know,” he returned, his right hand travelling down to rest over the black
lace of your underwear, left hand falling over your shoulder blades.

“I meant me of all people.”

“That wasn’t my intention.”

“Don’t do it,” you implored.

“I only said if the prosecution doesn’t do a good job. Besides, I haven’t even told you what it is I would do.”

“I can imagine. What you would do, I can imagine,” you declared grimly. Pausing, tightening your grip around him. “You said once they were in prison, that they were as good as dead, why go through this?”

“Because I don’t trust the sleaze in the prosecution to apprehend them before they flee the country.”

“Seto…” you begged.

“You’re too soft,” he growled. “You don’t know how to use the power and tools at your disposal. Any other woman in your position would be feared infinitely more, both as my wife and for the empire you’ve built through your own devices. Instead you choose to be the nation’s sweetheart,” he spat.

“There’s nothing wrong with being loved by a nation. Besides, I am feared,” you countered, thoroughly piqued.

“You’re about as terrifying as a bunny rabbit,” he chuckled derisively, raising a hand to stroke your hair.

“This conversation is going nowhere,” you tried to remove yourself from his grasp, “let go,” you demanded when he refused to move.

“I’ll have Roland guard you if you insist on going to work. He’s a trusted advisor and a competent bodyguard.”

“I can form my own security detail.”

“I’m sure you can,” he stated, “Having one of my men affords me some peace of mind, not to say that yours are incapable.”

“Whatever,” you mumbled, finally breaking free of his grasp. “My blush and highlighter smudged because of you,” you grumbled, “now I have to retouch it.”

“Yes, you’re the one with the problem,” he muttered, wiping in irritation at his chest.

You made to walk away before an idea occurred to you. Spinning around, you clasped your arm around his wrist. He looked up at you, irritation still weighing his expression.

“Wait! If you do what I ask, I’ll turn over half my shares of Kodama to you. That’s almost a thirty percent stake,” you offered. It was a reckless move you were aware.

“Don’t tempt me,” he smirked, “I can’t promise I’ll hold up my end of the bargain.”

…
Looking away from the window, you leaned your left elbow against the divider placed at the center of the backseat of the car, your middle and forefingers pressed against your throbbing forehead.

“Your husband isn’t a saint,” you heard Roland abruptly declare from the driver’s seat.

Your beloved husband was Satan reincarnate; you couldn’t be sure what this guy was on about.

Your eyelids lifted open under furrowed brows, eyes flickering to meet his reflection in the rear view mirror, his eyes obscured with dark sunglasses. You waited for him to speak.

“He’s not a saint but he’s a man who inherited a very destructive legacy; a war lord’s empire, and he chose to convert into a gaming corporation. He could have profited infinitely more had he –”

“I don’t recall ever asking for your opinion,” you coldly countered. You didn’t appreciate the feeling that he was reading your mind. Your husband did it plenty.

“Mrs. Kai-”

“That’s not my name,” you harshly interrupted. “I have a name, call me by my name.”

Clad in a black lace dress, a black blazer draped over your shoulders, a Chanel bag sitting by your crossed over legs and in a pair of pointed, nude Louboutin stilettos, you hoped any depiction of childlikeness your appearance portrayed was masked.

“Of course, Miss,” he complied, addressing you by your maiden name, albeit uncertainly. “I didn’t mean to step out of line. I couldn’t help but overhear the conversation you were having with Mr. Kaiba as he helped you into the car.”

“Your point?”

“I’ve watched over him since before he was in high school.”

“That’s an unfortunately long time to know the man.”

He laughed to mask his hesitation.

“As I was saying, he may not appear that way, but he does champion justice, fairness and he is very charitable.”

“Yes,” you declared sarcastically, “he’s the frontrunner for world peace.”

“Your words are a disservice,” he defended.

“Roland,” you sighed, a chilling composure to your tone, “you’re an advisor to my husband, is that right?”

“I occasionally advice Mr. Kaiba on select matters,” he agreed, slightly unnerved, if you had indeed read his tone correctly.

“What do you know of his plans to apprehend the current threat?” you inquired vaguely.

“Wakamura Tetsuo?” he clarified. You merely nodded. “Why he has ordered for the prosecution to –”

“The truth, Roland,” you drawled.
“As far as I’m concerned Mrs. Kaiba –” he faltered, quickly rephrasing his words with your maiden name, “he has no intention of pursuing Wakamura through his personal task force, I assure you.”

“I never mentioned anything about a task force,” you inquired.

You hadn’t even been aware of the existence of such a unit.

The man immediately froze, whatever words he had planned dying on his tongue.

“Roland, I like you, and you’ve been working for the Kaiba family far too long for Seto to just fire you. I won’t tell him, so tell me everything you know about what my husband is planning to do.”

“He only has your best interests in mind,” he began.

“Cut to the chase.”

“He really does plan to indict them legally. Mr. Kaiba has no intentions of differing from this unless complications arise.”

“Complications?” You cocked an eyebrow.

“As in if all those involved are not apprehended, if they attack again, or should any of them attempt to jump the border.”

“And if they do?” you demanded to know.

“I imagine those men will disappear as they planned – ”

“I’m assuming though not to a destination they had initially intended.”

“Precisely.”

“He wouldn’t get blood on his hands.” It was a question.

“He wouldn’t.”

You closed your eyes again, burying your face in your palm.

…”

“That modulation was odd, that whole part was… it didn’t even cadence, it just modulated, I don’t know how I feel about that,” you advised the composer as you listened to the new track he was proposing, sitting on the armrest of his chair.

“I thought it would sound overdone otherwise,” the young composer began to defend his work when a knock sounded from behind the glass door.

“Fancy seeing you in a studio,” you greeted your legal director as you motioned him to enter.

Offering a polite bow, he inquired if you could spare a moment to speak.

“Keep what you did,” you threw at the young man over your shoulder as you stood up from his chair, gesturing to the director to exit the studio with you. “Have a copy of the finished version sent my way.”
“The Japan Fair Trade Commission is imposing reforms on all ‘artists – agency’ contracts,” your legal director informed you.

“Do we have any contracts that fall outside of the revised requirements?” you questioned as you walked with him.

“Yes and no, some of our contracts nearing expirations should probably be looked at,” he began to say, “along with a few trainee –”

He was interrupted by your phone ringing in your hand.

Dread pulsing through you out of habit as you failed to recognize the number; you held the phone to your ear, attempting your best to appear composed.

“You should be needing the antidote by now,” you heard a weathered voice sound through the line. “How is it that the prosecutor’s office is calling for a press conference?”

A chill shot through your spine. You froze in your spot.

“I told you my husband was a difficult man to convince,” you responded monotonously, colour draining from your face as yesterday’s memories came rushing back. The memory of how vulnerable you had been in that moment when Wakamura walked in to your hospital room horrifying you.

“I suppose your husband doesn’t hold you in as high a regard,” he declared, an irritation underlining tone.

“You’re right, I’m a poor bargaining chip,” you agreed, disconnecting the line.

Sooner rather than later, they would come to realize that you weren’t poisoned, but for now they wouldn’t be tempted to use you as leverage to manipulate Seto, or at least you hoped.

“Sorry,” you turned to your legal director at the conclusion of the conversation, a cold sweat breaking across your back. He wore an extremely perplexed expression at what he had heard of your exchange. “Something came up; let’s discuss the contract revision at a later time. In the meanwhile have a hearing arranged for director Uchida for tomorrow, nine sharp. I’m sure the internal auditing department has been in contact with you.”

He nodded and you promptly excused yourself.

“Take me to Seto,” you ordered, meeting Roland at the end of the hallway.

The whole drive to Kaiba Corp. was spent in trepidation, your heart palpitating erratically. Your palms were sweating. You couldn’t be sure why hearing that man’s voice had broken your composure so thoroughly.

“Is Seto in?” you inquired from the receptionist sitting across from his office.

“Mr. Kaiba is currently in a meeting,” she informed. “Would you like me to notify him that you’re here?”

“You don’t need to, I’ll wait,” you advised, walking to take a seat against the wall.
You were forced to sit in wait for the next twenty something minutes. It didn’t feel like wasted time as you couldn’t seem to form a coherent thought that would allow you to be productive anyway.

Another few minutes idled by before Seto stormed out of his own office, trailed by a few men who seemed utterly demoralized.

He walked past you briskly, before pausing a few feet down the hallway and spinning on his heels to cast his gaze towards you, his eyes narrowed, almost as if he was doubting what he had seen.

“I didn’t know you were here,” he called to you from where he stood. “What are you doing waiting there?”

“I didn’t want to disturb -”

“Walk with me,” he ordered.

Standing up slowly, you walked to join his side.

“Where are we going?” you inquired, as the men who had been following him entered the elevator behind the two of you, filtering to the back quietly.

“The animations department.”

“Why do I need to come?”

“You look off,” he declared in English, “I didn’t feel easy leaving you there.”

He was perceptive.

You reserved yourself to silence.

You wouldn’t realize that what he had made known to you was half his reasoning. The other half was in the fact that he was particularly fond of your appearance that morning.

The reaction Seto inspired walking into a department was infinitely more severe and to an onlooker such as yourself was a great deal more humorous than what you inspired when you visited one of yours.

The temperature quite literally dropped a few Celsius.

The entire floor scrambled like rats in a sewer being intruded by a predator to fall into whatever acceptable formation your husband apparently expected. Chatter died to a nought, the department assuming an eerie silence, only to be punctuated by the occasional click of a mouse and fingers against keys. Anyone who had previously been standing ducked into their cubicle or other work station. Not one individual willing to make eye contact with Seto at the fear of being petrified by the menacing scowl plastered to his features. It was obvious as you scanned the space though, that productivity had also died with his entrance, everyone’s thoughts too acutely concentrated on holding themselves perfectly still, perhaps pretending to work if their distraught states allowed, in a desperate attempt to survive their boss’s visit without being fired – or brutally insulted.

At times such as this, you wondered how you get away with as much as you did with the man. You were certain that not one person in this space would dare allow a word to fall out of place in the presence of your husband, let alone raise their voice and scream at him the way you did.
In a way, it helped alleviate to a certain degree your current state of anxiety.

The men who had been trailing behind the two of you also mirrored their fellow employees, at least attempted to as they motioned to scamper back to their seats.

“I don’t recall dismissing you,” Seto snapped harshly, and everyone instinctively, visibly flinched at the tone. You almost did also, your hand wrapping discreetly around the little finger of his hand. He didn’t acknowledge the motion.

A middle aged gentleman came bounding out of his glorified cubicle which you were sure he dubbed an office, greeting Seto with a false pretense of enthusiasm under which it was obvious he was sweating bullets.

“I didn’t realize we would have the pleasure of receiving the president of Kodama this morning,” he addressed Seto, vaguely cowering.

This question piqued the interest of everyone who up until that moment had been avoiding looking anywhere in your general direction as it risked accidentally making eye contact with your husband. Hushed whispers began to float around the cubicles.

“Why?” Seto questioned roughly, “Are you conducting yourselves in a manner which would be an embarrassment to my corporation in the presence of a visitor?”

His undertone conveyed the question more harshly than it needed to be. This threw a dagger right through the whispers, silencing them promptly.

Seto then carried out a rather impressive onslaught against the entire department about how the animations for the upcoming virtual reality release looked like a third rate artist with fourth rate qualifications had drawn them and how he wouldn’t hesitate firing the whole lot as he had his logistics department if they were not redesigned by next week.

As you had assumed, your presence had no functionality besides perhaps being another star in his belt, only serving the purpose of inspiring awe. That or he was showing off to you, you couldn’t be certain. Though, you were too preoccupied in that moment to be angry was it indeed the former.

Leaving the department, once you were away from prying eyes, you cautiously slipped your arm around his, pulling yourself against him, your other arm slid down to lace your fingers through the hand you were already holding.

He peered down at you calculatingly.

“What’s with you?” he began to ask when the two of you turned a corner and you were met with a group of employees, chattering loudly amongst themselves.

They all froze, scared stiff, their eyes were all that were moving, as they drifted first towards Seto, then at you, before they fell towards your arm you had fastened on to him. Their eyes fell to the ground after that, shoulders wilting as if bracing for the incoming.

You motioned to separate yourself from your husband for the sake of professionalism, to be held firmly as he often did.

“Get back to work!” he bellowed at the cowering employees before him, and within a fraction of a second, they had dispersed as if dried seeds on a dandelion stem.

“You have a way with people don’t you,” you laughed lightly, looking up at him as he led you
away to his personal elevator.

Returning to his office, you stood perfectly still, mind drifting back towards the events of earlier that morning, your skin prickling more severely than the cold air of the elevator would cause.

“Do you mind if I just stay here for a while?” you asked him uncertainly as you exited the elevator behind him, making your way towards the sofa. His blue eyes followed you intently in silence as he sat at his desk.

“Come here,” he finally called, “you definitely seem…off.”

“I’m alright,” you assured shakily, “I just need a moment.”

“You came to my company because you needed a moment to breathe? What happened?” he demanded to know. You drew in a deep breath; your exhale sounded you more laboured than you had anticipated. “Come here,” he ordered again more sternly.

You considered his request for a moment longer before walking up to him. He pulled you into his lap.

“Tell me what happened, you look like a deer in headlights,” he husked in your ear. Perhaps by now he was aware of exactly what effect that tone of voice had on you.

For whatever reason, your first reaction was to turn around and crush your lips against his. He didn’t object despite the surprise you likely caught him with, gently placing a hand against your back as he pulled you closer. He kissed you for a moment longer before pulling away.

“I won’t ask a third time,” he informed you harshly.

“Wakamura called.”

“I see. What did he say?” he asked, his usual composure returning to him.

“Asked me why the prosecutor’s office was calling a press conference, asked if I didn’t need the antidote and if you didn’t hold me a high enough regard to care for my life,” you summarised.

He scoffed.

“And?”

“I told him I clearly wasn’t a useful bargaining chip.”

He released what resembled a grunt.

“That could backfire. They could just kill you if they think you aren’t useful in manipulating me,” he berated. “You should have been more careful.”

You hadn’t considered that.

“This is why I said –”

“Seto, please just stick with the law, I’m begging you.”

His eyes narrowed, brows knitting together.

“I’m not sure where you got the impression that I was going to murder these people,” he declared
He lifted his arm, pushing back his suit sleeve as he regarded the time on his wrist watch. Reaching for his drawer he retrieved a remote, spinning his chair to face the wall opposite the elevator, he pointed the remote at the far blank wall. At the press of a button, a portion of the wall slid over, revealing a massive flat screen TV.

The screen flickered to life, and Seto changed the channel. It changed to display the twelve o’clock news, conveniently just as the news anchor was introducing the next news story.

“A press conference was held earlier today by the Domino prosecutor’s office publicizing an open investigation on Wakamura Tetsuo and the executive directors of Wakaetsu Industries for the charges of high treason and collusion with foreign governments with the intent of illegal weapon dealing. A warrant has been issued for the search and seizure of Wakaetsu Industries along with all its affiliates. The prosecution has also revealed that they have in their possession a conclusive list of all those involved with this conspiracy, with the list extending to some former members of the board of directors from Kodama Corporation, including its former director of research and development Egusa Sotatsu…”

“Why are you showing me this?” you questioned.

“….Arrest warrants have been issued and they have been summoned by the prosecution… The full list of names disclosed is available…”

He switched the TV off.

“This is foolish,” Seto asserted, “I’m doing this for your sake, but don’t foolishly believe that Kodama won’t receive at least some damage with the former board involved in this. My way would have been discreet. There’s only so much I can do to manipulate how the truth is conveyed to the public.”

That explained why your corporation’s AI wasn’t mentioned anywhere in that report. You also noticed Uchida, who was still due to be dismissed and Harada was not included in the list of names the news anchor read out.

“You don’t sound like a man who has given up his ways,” you remarked, looking away.

“How perceptive,” he spoke in a spine chilling whisper. Your eyes darted up to meet his. “Don’t look at me like that,” he growled, “a backup plan is necessary.”

“And you promise that’s all that it will be?”

“Don’t try to bind me with words.”

“Seto!” you exclaimed, “You told me you wouldn’t do anything that was against my wishes.”

“I also said I would only do it if it was in your best interest.”

“Who decides what is and is not in my best interest?” you demanded to know.

“Me.”

“Right, because that makes sense,” you drawled sarcastically.

“Here,” he abruptly declared, leaning against you as he reached into a drawer and produced a white
envelope with the insignia of the prosecutor’s office stamped on the edge.

You picked up the envelope off the table, wrestling the papers out, as you spared a questioning glance at your husband.

“Your father wasn’t on the list,” he extended blandly.

“And they just let you take it? Seto, removing evidence involved like this in an investigation from the prosecution is illegal.”

“It’s a copy. And you still don’t know how I operate, do you?”

“So, is this your edited copy?” you inquired with a hint of animosity to your tone, sighing at his earlier remark as you sifted through the pages.

“No, his name was never on the list. Wakamura was bluffing, as I expected.”

“That’s a relief,” you mumbled under your breath, intending the comment mostly to yourself.

He snatched the papers out of your hands, tossing it on the desk. His hands wrapped around you, pulling you against him.

“I have work,” you resisted.

He released a growl from low in his throat, seemingly conveying his denial to your request.

“So do I,” he added a moment later, tightening his grip.

You took a deep breath against him; perhaps it really was just that obvious that you desperately needed this.

…

Seto had sauntered into your office around late six demanding that he take you home for the day. The ensuing negotiation hadn’t been a negotiation at all, with him storming up to your desk, forcefully closing your laptop and declaring that you were leaving.

Returning to the mansion, a maid handed you a collection of envelopes explaining how it was the mail for the day.

“The invitations for the Imperial Ball are here,” you informed Seto as you ascended the stairs after him, looking over the white, gold trimmed envelopes.

The Imperial Ball was the most formal and high profile affair of spring for the Japanese elite. The event was traditionally held by the Imperial family, though the occasion had evolved to be more a symbol of status and the royal family was almost never present and was now arranged by the ministry of arts and culture.

It was customary for unmarried women to wear white to the ball, while married women wore colour, typically the colour associated most closely with their family, though any colour was acceptable.

Had your marriage been public knowledge, you would have most likely worn light blue.

“I see they sent two separate invites,” he noted with discontentment, looking over his shoulder.
“The council doesn’t know we’re married,” you reminded him, “of course they’re going to send two separate ones. I’m surprised this was forwarded here from my address.”

“Seeing you last year, I had thought it would the last time you would be wearing white,” he remarked as you both entered the bedroom.

This found you with confusion at first.

“Seeing me last year?” you repeated bemused, as he threw his suit jacket over the bed, beginning to unbutton his shirt.

“At the Imperial Ball last year,” he explained flatly.

A chill raised the hair on your arms.

If this didn’t confirm what his younger brother had said about Seto watching over you for the past three years, you weren’t sure what did.

“I didn’t realize you were there,” you mumbled.

“That’s an idiotic thing to not realize.”

It also made you more acutely conscious of how if the man was adamant enough in accomplishing or possessing something, there wasn’t a force to impede him, even you. This awareness in the context of his intentions regarding Wakamura only stood to worsen your foreboding.

Shedding your blazer, unzipping your dress, you allowed it to pool around your feet.

Walking up to your husband again from behind, you wrapped your arms around him as he discarded his dress shirt.

“Tell me what you want from me,” you purred against his back. You knew he was well aware of what you were referring to.

“This didn’t work for you in the morning,” he stated roughly, “what makes you think it will be any differently this time around?”

“I’m asking you what you want from me this time.”

“What I want is for you to not do this every time you see me,” declared firmly, “you might not like what you get.”

You couldn’t be sure how to interpret those words.

“Seto,” you cooed.

“Don’t try to seduce me; you’re not very good at it.”

“I may not be good at it,” you spoke with hesitance weighing your tone, apprehensive of the man you were embracing, “but I still get you every time.”

‘Wow you really suck at this,’ you told yourself, cringing at how bland the words you had meant to sound sultry produced themselves.

“Thus my earlier words.” He paused before continuing, “You won’t dissuade me from my intentions like this.”
You heaved a sigh before detaching yourself from him, shuffling your feet to the bathroom as he disappeared into the closet.

... 

Hyobe Uchida was dismissed the following day. It was a much more dramatic debacle than you had wanted, with security needing to be called to have the director removed from the premise.

Roland continued to be your personal body guard, though you took it upon yourself to form a new, personal security detail.

Over the course of the following weeks, Wakamura’s accomplices were apprehended by the police one after another, and transferred to the prosecutor’s office for interrogation. It wouldn’t be much of an investigation you knew, considering there was conclusive evidence against each one of them and your husband obviously had an iron grip on the prosecution as if they were puppets on a string.

While Wakamura remained at large, you grew to suspect the degree of your husband’s personal involvement with the actual process of arresting the traitors.

There were many nights and early hours of the morning where you had rolled over to your husband’s side of the bed, reaching for him, only to discover the bed empty. You would find yourself waking up next to him however, as if he had never been absent.

At first you had believed he was working in his study or wandering the mansion for whatever reason. However, having been roused one morning two nights prior, returning from somewhere unknown to you fully dressed, you had just about confirmed your suppositions.

Asking him directly would leave you nowhere, and staying up all night would make him stay.

You noticed he maintained his distance at night in bed these days. If he ever held you, his embrace was so cautious that it felt almost calculated. There were suddenly too many secrets, conversations you weren’t allowed to hear. He would come home early but the door of his study was closed to you. He would only kiss you to deter you from your relentless probing.

You grew restless for answers.

In a stroke of luck, or perhaps misfortune, the opportunity afforded itself late that night.

The two of you were so hopelessly tangled that you were woken by your husband leaning over you towards the opposite nightstand, reaching for his phone. You couldn’t be sure how you had ended up again on his side of the bed.

“What the hell is that supposed to mean?” you heard him growl under his breath at someone on the opposite end, “Didn’t I order that you block off all air and seaports to prevent exactly this?” You lay as still as you possibly could, breathing as quietly as you could. Your legs were woven with his, your head against his neck, your hand reached over his chest. “Domino peer? I’ll be there; you better not let him get away if you know what’s good for you.”

He very gently moved your head off his outstretched arm, laying you on the pillow, carefully lifting your arm and folding it over you, before untangling his legs from yours under the sheets, clearly unaware that you were awake.

You watched him slip into the closet, and then swiftly slip out, having changing into a pair of black
pants. He pulled a black shirt over his head as he reached the bedroom door.

You pretended to be asleep when he turned to look back over at you on the bed. The moment the lock clicked behind him, you flew out of bed.

You only hesitated for a moment in your pursuit of him as you idled in front of the closet after slipping into a pair of black, kitten heeled sling back sandals, as you debated whether or not you had the time to change out of your black, lace trimmed, slip nightgown. Not bothering to buckle the ankle strap, cursing at yourself for being unable to find a pair of flats which required no fastening, you tore a long grey cardigan from its hanger to cover up as you raced down the hallways of the mansion, fingers tightly gripping your fully loaded gun, keys fisted into your other hand.

Tripping a number of times as your feet slipped out of your undone sandals, you fell into the car, careful not to be noticed as your husband sped out in a black car similar to yours, past you.

Driving down the driveway, you noticed the gates remained closed.

“Open the gates,” you demanded of the two guards.

“My apologies but Mr. Kaiba has given us special orders to keep you from leaving,” one man notified you.

“Open the gate or I swear I won’t hesitate blowing your brains out,” you warned, cocking the barrel of the gun against the one guard’s forehead. Your eyes darted towards the other, fumbling with his phone, “Make that phone call and I will give you a hole on your pretty little forehead to match.”

“Mrs. Kaiba!”

“Do I look like I’m playing?” you growled through gritted teeth, flipping the safety off.

A moment passed where all three of you remained extremely still. Then they very hesitantly complied, drawing the wrought iron gates open.

Following after Seto, you tore down the deserted streets of Domino, navigating towards the peer. Your BMW couldn’t possibly maintain the speed he was burning the rubber at, or perhaps your husband’s cars were better suited for the race tracks, because you had lost sight him within seconds. Not that it mattered, you were fairly certain of your final destination, and not trailing him so closely was likely a better alternative as it would otherwise be near impossible to not be noticed by him considering you were possibly the only people on the streets at this time of the morning.

Your security team wouldn’t be reporting for duty until the next morning, as you had no real use for them when you were inside the mansion. You were certain however, that the mansion’s security team would be on your trail like blood hounds within the next few minutes.

…

The night air was icy and crisp, your skin under your black nightie prickling as the wind grazed past your bare shoulder the grey cardigan had exposed, slipping to the crook of your elbow. Your undone ankle straps dragging against the ragged cement of the peer with each reluctant step, the cold barrel of the gun kissing your temple, you wondered where things had gone wrong.

Perhaps the answer was obvious and it was a stupid thing to wonder.

Standing feet away from your husband, seeing his blue eyes harden to stone; you knew that if you
were fortunate enough to survive, he would kill you twice.
Apologies for the delay, September found me like a rain of knives, or bullets even, and mentally not off to a good start either, already. So this is the final chapter, thank you so much to everyone that followed this story this far, and for all the love it received, I’m incredibly grateful. Not sure if this was the ending you wanted, or if it could even necessarily be called happy, but I do sincerely hope you enjoy it regardless. I was more intent on writing a realistic ending rather than a cliché “they live happily ever after one.” If I have one regret, it would be not taking longer to perfect each chapter, instead of posting so frequently. Sometimes I wonder what this relationship would have been like if all this drama didn’t exist, and I do think about writing this story without the murder plot. Actually I think about that a lot. Anyway, thank you so much to PandaMuse who spent almost as much time as I did writing this story, commenting since the very early chapters, along with sakuchwan, BeautifulMonsters, Sincerely_KT, Scarletbelle87, Erindevlin4u, xAlmasyx, Crys, Red_Vengeance for the lovely fan art, all those who left Kudos on this work and everyone, including the silent readers who so diligently loved this story. Till we meet again ~

A single bullet piercing the night resounded through the crisp air. You froze, one hand clasped over your half open car door, fingers tightened around the cold metal of your pistol’s trigger. Your ankle straps flailed loosely as you stepped out of your car behind another which closely resembled your husband’s. You wished you had memorized the license plate number.

You heard a voice following the earlier bullet as it rang through the night air. You knew that voice, Seto’s voice.

Partially walking, partially shuffling your feet, a voice urged you to buckle your straps, but your feet kept moving forward, drawn like a moth to a flame towards the muffled voice.

“I know you’re here, I have the place surrounded,” he had declared. “There’s no escape! Nothing can save you now.”

The acrid odour of burnt gunpowder lingered heavily in the air. You stepped on transparent cherry petals, ironed onto the cement, trodden over by many. The distinct roar of waves crashing against the peer married the hum of the harsh wind.

Your gun pointed at the ground, trigger held with both hands, you inched forward along the green, ridged, metal cargo container, your eyes darting back and forth between the passage created by the orange container which stretched parallel to you in the poorly lit dock.

You heard a demented laugh ring in the air, the echo having a more severe effect on your cold prickled skin than the wind. What was more unnerving was that it belonged to your husband.

“Shooting me won’t do you any favours Wakamura, like I said, I have the place surrounded. Come out and fight me like a man you bastard!”
A chill ran down your spine at the declaration.

Peering past the edge of the container you had crept towards, the cement dock stretching before you in the far distance, standing against the constant assault of the rough waves below, the light from the single street light which curved above was a hair’s breadth away from grazing your right arm; the tall green container shielding you from being exposed.

Your eyes were drawn to your husband, standing with his gun pointed at two men who reflected his stance, a distinct red dot focused on the center of his forehead. Past the dozen or so men who had their guns drawn against these two adversaries currently aiming for your husband, you followed the thin red thread of light which connected the aforementioned red dot up to the guard tower to Seto’s left.

The army of men surrounding Seto were useless, they couldn’t guard him. Your husband was unmatched in hand to hand combat; the two men before him were not the root of his hesitation.

Eyes flicking back in the direction of the guard tower obscured by darkness, you could see the glint of moving metal. You imagined a finger hooked around a trigger.

‘It was better to ask for forgiveness than ask for permission,’ you told yourself, taking aim at the sniper. You were at a disadvantage, your range of motion limited, you were also unable to visualize the orientation of your target.

A light flared through the blackness in the tower as the smooth metal moved, reflecting off it a sliver of light which had escaped off the light post above you, and you knew you had to move, now.

Thoughts of panic, fear and anxiety were soothed by the coursing adrenaline. Your body pulsed under the rush. Stabilizing your trembling hand, as your body shivered against the cold breath of the wind, you pulled the trigger, one eye shut to achieve greater precision.

The red dot fell to the sky; a body fell forward, meeting the hard ground with a thud. He wasn’t dead, you were certain.

You had imagined your husband’s eyes darting in your direction as you pulled your back flush against the freezing metal of the cargo container, drawing from your skin a wave of electricity at the cool touch which permeated the thick weave of your long cardigan. As you stole a glance, you saw Seto using the distraction the unexpected reversal afforded him to his benefit.

His arm shot forward, grappling the barrel of the one gunman, while his opposite foot simultaneous made direct contact with the gut of the other. A sharp groan cracked and rippled into the distance.

Within moments, the three men, the sharp shooter included, were apprehended and brought to their knees.

What you had failed to notice however, your hearing drowned by the conflict, was footsteps approaching you from behind.

You felt fingers grasping the roots of your hair at its base, before slamming you forcefully against the thick metal next to you. You felt the impact on the opposite side of your head, your ears beginning to ring. Your vision blurred for an instant.

When you recovered, you had the cold barrel of a gun kissing you, your shoulder exposed as your cardigan had slid downwards in the heat of the struggle.
Urged forward by the fingers tightened to the base of your skull, you emerged from behind the shadows to face your husband.

Seto immediately raised his gun again, the barrel aimed narrowly past your ear towards your captor.

“Careful Kaiba, I don’t think you want me to put a hole in your pretty little wife’s head. Lower the gun.”

You recognized that weathered voice.

Seto’s composure never once betraying him, his blue eyes darkened with rage. His eyes moved back and forth between the darkness above both of you, before falling back on the man behind you. He looked terrifying, his mere glare daunting.

“You have more red dots pointed at your head than you would if you had a rash, let her go Wakamura,” your husband thundered over the roaring waves behind him through gritted teeth.

“And you think the men you’ve taken down of mine are all I came with? Look around Kaiba, who has who surrounded?”

Silent as the night, you could see silhouettes of his men materialize at the edges of darkness.

Seto’s men immediately spun around to aim their weapons at the figures.

His fingers untangled from your hair, travelling to wrap around your chin, snapping your neck sideways to face him over your shoulder. Your breathing broke into ragged pants.

“Get your filthy fingers off my wife,” you heard Seto growl, his eyes wandering back to meet the corners of yours after observing the figures obscured by the veil of night.

“Call off the snipers and grant us free passage off the dock, and I’ll let her live,” Wakamura negotiated.

“He’ll do no such thing,” you bit back through your restrained jaw. A sharp blow meeting the back of your neck, you faltered forward before the hand at your jaw grabbed you back by your hair, holding you up, the jerking motion pulling waves of pain up your neck to your skull. You bit back a cry.

“She’s feisty,” your captor laughed manically, “maybe I’ll take her with me and you can send me the AI file I want in exchange for her.”

“You can try,” was all your husband said, a spine chilling register to his tone.

“The word on your directors’ mouths is that your wife is pregnant Kaiba, and I’ll take great pleasure taking both her and your child from you if you don’t do exactly as I say.”

Wait, what?

Your gun was cloaked by the sagging sleeve in your left hand. You could feel the metal warming against the heat of your hand.

Your head held tilted up to face Seto again, the look in his eye read well concealed desperation. To anyone else, you were sure it read unfazed composure.

Switching your gun to your dominant hand would easily draw the attention of the many eyes
watching, and you concluded that your left arm had a closer range of motion than your right given how you were held against the treacherous scum.

“Fine,” Seto began to concede, not denying Wakamura’s assertion. You wouldn’t allow him.

“That’s a vital point,” you declared abruptly, shrouding in confusion all those who couldn’t see the pistol held in your uncomfortably twisted arm against where you assumed his liver and gallbladder would be, Seto included. “I can’t miss at this close a range.”

“Do you not realize how many guns are pointed at you, you stupid girl?” he barked back.

“Killing treacherous vermin like you is a service to this country, I can’t think of a better way to go than serving my country, can you?” you dared to speak in a strained whisper.

You composure was a thinly veiled lie. You were trembling ever so softly all over, your voice threatening to crack, breath growing increasingly more erratic. You felt tears burn your eyes dried from the sea breeze.

“Don’t do anything stupid,” Seto urged. He couldn’t have heard your last words, so you assumed he was referring to your previous remark.

“I would listen to your husband if I were you,” Wakamura drawled darkly from behind you.

It was a stale mate.

You had calculated the possible scenarios countless times; you were sure your husband had too. Each possibility concluded in at least two bullets being lodged into Wakamura’s and then your head.

If you could act diligently however, you realized there was only one gunman – that you could see – who could possibly have direct aim at you. How you would escape Wakamura’s bullet, you couldn’t be sure.

“Seto, I’m so sorry,” you cried out, shifting your gun just to the left of where a bullet wound wouldn’t be critical, and pulling the trigger. A sharp groan of pain echoed into the night, followed immediately by two more; cries as metal ate into flesh, before the whole dock dissolved into chaos under a rain of bullets.

Your mind took a moment to process what had just transpired. Your husband had shot Wakamura in the shoulder as he faltered, a mere moment before he had the opportunity to pull his trigger against your temple. Your captor fell back, releasing you and almost instantaneously, Seto’s gun fired at the gunman that had the closest aim at you.

The lasers of the snipers dispersed instantly towards the figures lurking in the darkness, the still field reducing to crossfire.

You could hear the distant echo of police sirens.

You fell forward, drowned by the terror that you had been keeping at bay as it pulsed through the edges of your conscious. Your knees met the harsh concrete, your mind imploring you to stand and fight, or at the very least run.

You heard your name being called, the voice masked by the deafening gunfire.

“Get up,” you heard a harsh voice tearing through the roar that had faded to blank noise. The
command was accompanied by a hand snaking under your arms, pulling you flush against a warm body. Your knees buckled as the tension seeped through. “Pull yourself together if you want the both of us off to make it out of here alive,” Seto barked. “Lay low and shoot if you think it’s absolutely necessary.” His fingers wrapped under your chin, tilting your head up, forcing you to hold his gaze, burning a fiery blue. “Understand?”

You nodded mechanically, returning his gaze with wide eyes.

He took two steps before momentarily pausing over Wakamura’s barely conscious form, his eyes narrowed dangerously as he pointed his gun towards the man straddling the fine line between life and death.

“This one’s for touching my wife,” he growled, his words soaked in venom.

“Seto don’t – ” you began to protest, but before you could form a sentence with any coherence in your traumatised state, his gun had fired. You winced hearing the bullet drill into asphalt. A distant part of you realizing that the noise didn’t match what you had been anticipating, you hesitantly opened your eyes. Seto had lodged the bullet into the ground mere centimeters from the man’s head.

Before you could comment on or even begin to react, you were dragged away under Seto’s arm, as he shielded you from the raining bullets.

You couldn’t be sure how your legs carried you. His arm secured around you, Seto fired bullet after bullet as he pulled you through the crossfire, not one of his bullets missing its intended target. You were only afforded the opportunity once to fire, raising your arm directly in front of you as you aimed at the man’s hand which held his weapon, discharging your bullet before Seto had the chance to turn his focus away from the group that had previously been occupying his attention as they pursued the two of you.

A few more moments were spent that way as if in a trance before a wave of uniforms swept past the both of you, a small circle of officers forming around you, guarding you.

A long, almost deafening silence endured as you sat alone in Seto’s car, waiting for him to tie up the loose strings from the chaos outside.

The door closing sharply on the driver’s side returned your sense of hearing, the distant voices from beyond the vehicle perceptible to your ears.

“I respected your wishes,” your husband husked as the two of you sat in his car following the men being arrested, and Wakamura taken to the hospital under protected custody. “I didn’t shoot to kill any of them.”

You sat perfectly still, his words not quite registering in your mind.

“Are you hurt?” you finally whispered, your small hand resting against his thigh. You registered the most obscure details in that moment; the raised, ridged detailing on his black denim jeans, the hum of the cold air blowing out from the fan in the car’s dashboard, the deadly silence disturbed by the muffled voices barking commands outside the car.

“I’m fine,” he affirmed. “You were reckless.” He reached over, turning your head to face him, as he wiped the corner of your mouth with his dark sleeve. “Look at this,” he growled, “you’re bleeding.”

You brought a hand to your lip, wincing as it stung to touch. You understood that your lip must
have been cut by a tooth when your head was forced against the metal container.

“I’m sorry.”

“You saved my life.”

“What?”

“No one of my men were in a position to take out that sniper. My snipers weren’t in position yet either. I’m sure you know how I feel about you coming here, but I will give you credit where it is due,” he declared. “Your bullet saved my life.”

“This is why I said you should leave it to the police.”

Your hand was quivering against his thigh.

“I hardly think you’re in a position to berate me,” he shot back. His eyes drifted to your shaking hand. He covered it with his much larger hand, though his stoic composure persisted.

“I didn’t want to become a widow at twenty-one,” you spoke as you suppressed a sniffle, “do you know what crossed my mind seeing you — ” though you couldn’t finish.

“This is why I tried to keep you home,” he gruffly asserted.

“You just said — ” Your voice cracked, robbing you of conveying your thoughts further.

You sighed, pulling your hand away. His eyes flicked up to you at your motion. You spared a moment to look back at him before leaning into him, embracing him. He lifted his arms in surprise as you wrapped yours around him.

“I didn’t even get to put a ring on your finger, I wanted to see you at least wearing my wedding ring before I died,” you spoke softly.

“You’re spewing nonsense and being dramatic again,” he growled, causing your heart to sink, though his hands gently rubbed circles over your back as he continued. “Why would you die before that happens? With this side show circus behind us, we have our whole lives ahead of us.”

A small smile broke across your lips.

“Take me home?”

…

Leaning against Seto’s chest in bed, it felt surreal; there was a sense of depersonalization about it. You wondered if this real. It was obvious neither of you could sleep. You watched daybreak in the distance through the open curtains over your shoulder.

His left hand was folded under you, yours splayed over his chest.

“Get some sleep; I need to leave for work soon,” he told you. You shook your head.

“I’m coming to work with you.”

“Don’t be ridiculous, you’ll do no such thing.”

That statement found you with a slightly more aggressive edge than you saw necessary.
“You’re not going to work… are you?”

“What are you on about?” he question in irritation.

“Seto, are you still trying to lie to me after all of this?”

He sighed, irritation persisting in his tone.

“Fine,” he conceded, “you want to play Mrs. Kaiba so bad, I’ll take you with me.”

“I’m not playing anything,” you corrected him.

He grunted in response.

Another few moments crept in silence, your fingers playing absentmindedly at the collar of his shirt.

“Why does your board members think I’m pregnant?” you asked him abruptly, his head snapping to the side to face you.

“Because you fainted at the dinner, and I’m assuming the way you excused yourself without proper explanation from the table, I wouldn’t know.”

…You had also overshared the intimacy you shared with your husband to Kaoru that night out of desperation.

“You knew about it?”

“I did.”

“And you did nothing to alleviate those rumours?”

“I saw no reason to intervene.”

“Seto!” you called out in disbelief.

“You’re my wife, you being pregnant isn’t scandalous. Besides, it wasn’t worth my time and effort to address.”

You saw ulterior motives. It was impressive however, the way he found a way to justify each of his actions in a rational sounding way that was so frustratingly convincing. You decided it wasn’t worth your effort to pursue it.

A little over an hour must have passed before Seto’s alarm rang, as it always did at five thirty in the morning.

“Alright, get off,” he ordered, motioning to move your hand away from him.

Stubbornly, you did the exact opposite, burying your face in his neck as you pulled yourself closer to him, whining faintly as you swung your folded knee over his legs, tightening your fingers around him.

His sighed in exasperation.

“Why are you doing this?”
“Because I can.”

He sighed again, and adjusted his shoulder under you, though he made no further motion to pull away.

“You require a ridiculous amount of affection,” he remarked. His voice grazed your ear like velvet.

“Did you think I wouldn’t?” the words came smothered against his neck. You considered his words again for a moment. “Does it bother you?”

“As long as it’s me you’re asking.”

It was strange and yet so incredibly beautiful how sometimes you found the most light in a person who has seen unspeakable darkness. His words afforded a sensation akin to feeling an exhausted heart – your heart – coming up for air from a long storm of intoxication and suffocation and breathing again; the feeling of a tired heart learning to beat again.

“Always.”

He growled low in his throat, seemingly with contentment before curving himself around you, surrounding you.

It was when his phone rang another long while after that he drew himself away slightly to answer. He listened to whoever for a few lengthy minutes, not speaking, before replying simply with an “I see,” and disconnecting the line. You watched his expression harden, and while you had been nestled against his other ear, you couldn’t decipher a word the voice on the other end had spoken.

“What was that about?” you subsequently questioned, curious about the mysterious report your husband was delivered.

“Nothing, get dressed,” he simply asked, before slipping away from you, and heading in the direction of the bathroom.

…

Dressed in a sleek black silk dress with a deep v neck with loose sleeves which gathered past your elbows, and draped effortlessly, overlapping at the waist where a large silk bow secured the dress, you fiddled with the asymmetrical hem line which grazed your knees, eyes cast directly at your black strapped stilettos which wrapped around your ankles, as you sat in the car unnerved and frustrated. You watched the streetlights pass endlessly, surroundings growing unfamiliar while your husband refused to afford you any clarity on where it was he was taking you.

Stepping out of the car after a considerably long drive, you gazed up at the large, misted glass building which stretched up to the poorly lit sky.

“What are we doing at a hospital?” you inquired as you walked around to join him, slipping your arm around his.

“Wakamura is supposed to be out of the operating room by now – ” he stated, distractedly looking over his phone, eyes flying left to right across what looked to be an email or similar message.

“Why are we – I mean, I’m sure he’s out of surgery, but the chances of him being conscious are slim to none,” you questioned, your husband’s motives and objectives incomprehensible to you.
“What would you even say?”

“I just need him to hear me. Besides, vermin like him doesn’t stay down.”

The two of you entered through the employees' entrance, so as to not make your presence known, either to the public or lurking media, navigating your way discreetly to the intensive care unit.

You were advised that while he was yet to regain consciousness, that Wakamura was in a stable condition following a successful surgical procedure.

Your husband stormed into the isolated area heavily guarded with police personnel as well as Seto’s own men - much to your surprise.

Dismissing all of them, Seto demanded that you stand a few feet away while he had a ‘conversation,’ with the man lying unconsciousness, bound by an oxygen mask and countless tubes and wires.

“He’s induced, he’s hardly conscious, and definitely not responsive,” you questioned, slipping further into your state of perplexity. “What exactly are you hoping to achieve?”

You followed Seto’s line of vision down to the man’s fingers, almost undiscernibly twitching. You noticed his eyes rolling beneath his closed eyelids which were flickering.

Ignoring your questions, Seto bent over, speaking words which fell deaf on your ears.

“We can go,” Seto declared immediately following, turning on his heels.

You would never know what he had said, and not find out if the other had heard; at least until many days later.

“What did you say?” you asked, peering up at him as he walked with you on his arm down the dreary halls of the hospital’s southern wing.

“Nothing of consequence.”

…

“You didn’t eat properly at dinner,” he remarked, driving back from the hospital. “With this circus behind us, I think it’s time you start paying better attention to your health. I need to visit the prosecutor’s office later to oversee some things, let’s have breakfast before that so you don’t collapse on me.”

You silently agreed.

Breakfast was a quiet affair, there were many things to be said, but as all your thoughts came rushing forward at once, you couldn’t seem to properly vocalise even one of them.

The silence from Seto’s end was a result of his usual, composed disposition.

“You’re awfully silent,” he observed eventually, as you reserved yourself to overlook the garden below the glass covered balcony of the French café the two of you were currently seated on. You watched the last of the cherry petals drift into the distance past you.

You shifted your gaze to hold his, the corners of your mouth wrinkling into a small smile.

“You know, I have so much to say, I just don’t know what to say first,” you confessed, watching
his expression grow quizzical.

“Like what?” he questioned, a familiar sharpness to his tone.

You shook your head dismissively, “I don’t know, just – obvious things, like how relieved I am about putting this behind us,” you exhaled stiffly through your nose, as if to release a pent up burden that had been smothering you, though it continued to weigh you, “other not so obvious things,” you paused, eyes drifting down to the bubbles fizzling on the surface of your pink lemonade, “like how to – ”

You faltered, train of thought disappearing with the vanishing bubbles of your beverage.

“How to what?” your husband interjected at your silence.

“What it will be like being married to you.” You watched his features contort at the remark, so you clarified. “I feel like we spent so much energy on this that it defined certain interactions in our relationship, and I wonder how – how we’ll be, in its absence,” you admitted softly.

“You’re afraid we’ll drift apart,” Seto stated bluntly. The assertion stung, though only because he was right.

“Yeah…actually.”

“I disagree,” he declared with unwavering coincidence, “We’re beyond that. There’s no reason to change a particular thing even if initially it grew to be that way because of this threat. Is that all?”

“No, but like you said, we have our whole lives to figure it all out.”

“You manage to make everything you say sound so unnecessarily idealistic.”

“This was exactly what you said,” you retorted.

“It didn’t sound like some girl scout speech when I said it,” he countered, voice twisting sourly with the assertion, though a smirk played on his lips.

“Oh get off your high horse, just because your voice is like three octaves deeper than mine.”

“One octave, not three,” he corrected in a matter-of-fact tone.

You couldn’t find it in yourself to counter that with any seriousness, a sincere laugh leaving you. You bit your lip to hold your lips from stretching as far it did.

“What’s so funny?” he demanded to know with narrowed eyes.

“Nothing of consequence,” you mimicked, reaching your hand across the table to hold his, your engagement ring catching the morning sun, glowing an ethereal blue.

He watched you with bright, clear blue eyes reflecting the sunlight, before picking up his fork with his left hand, making no motion to remove his right hand from your grasp.

…

The prosecutor’s office was swarming with reporters. It would do neither of you any good to be seen there given the circumstances, so sitting perfectly still in the passenger’s seat, you watched with a certain degree of awe at the sea of reporters which seemed to feed endlessly through the revolving glass doors into the building’s lobby.
“Put your sunglasses on,” Seto advised, following suit.

“You can’t be serious, do you not see that?”

“I don’t plan to take you through there,” he firmly declared. “The shades are a precaution.”

“Why?” you scoffed, “They’ll still recognize us.” Though hearing his exasperated growl, you complied.

Cautiously stepping out of the car, careful to not falter and accidentally sprain your ankle with how you placed your heel against the cracked asphalt of the parking lot, Seto was already standing beside your door, offering his hand as you stood up.

He seemed to consider something as he took his next steps, removing your arm from around his, as he wrapped it around you, fingers firmly grasping at your upper arm, pulling you tightly against him.

Leaving the sanctuary of sorts the tall yet trimmed hedges had provided as it covered you from the wandering eyes of reporters, Seto was brisk in his stride, expecting you to match his steps while obviously forgetting the near half a foot difference in height which existed in spite of the dangerously high stilettos.

He looked down at you with unrestrained irritation, opening his mouth, likely to criticize how you constantly stumbled next to him. He hesitated for a moment, observing your form, perhaps grasping how you hardly reached past his shoulders.

“Careful, don’t trip,” he advised, though he made no motion to slow down.

Walking up stone steps which led around the building, your husband held open a side door after punching in an access code.

The second he had stepped through that door into what was initially an empty hallway, his presence was immediately known, and three gentlemen in suits had gathered around him, offering their respects.

Following a moment’s delay, an older man with greying hair and a greyer beard materialized. You recognized him to be the chief prosecutor of the Domino prosecutor’s branch. Despite being much older than your husband, and in spite of how dignified a position he occupied, the gentleman held his gaze cast low.

A polite bow was offered, and you were guided towards his office.

Seto swiftly scanned over the documents involved with the investigation, the papers listing the suspects, the extent of their involvement in the plot, along with evidence that would lead to their indictment.

The list was extensive, encompassing even those individuals who had served no other purpose besides being pawns and foot soldiers in the grand scheme. Your eyes caughtparticularly on the profile of the man you had first seen at the golf course, and later at the broadcasting station when he delivered Wakamura’s threat to you via a yellow sticky note.

Seemingly satisfied with the content of the report, Seto released a hum conveying his approval, vaguely nodding to himself before dropping the last of the files on the table, focusing his gaze on the man who sat across.
“I want every last one of these scum on death row, is that understood?” your husband barked at the chief prosecutor, “and I don’t care how you do it,” he growled, plainly insinuating that he didn’t care how fair the legal proceedings that would achieve this intended effect had to be.

You knew this was what was fit for the crime of treason, and yet hearing it physically vocalised disturbed you for a reason unbeknownst to you, possibly, in your husband’s words, as a result of how morally bound you had the tendency to be.

Unconsciously, your fingers tightened around his grey suit jacket sleeve, thoroughly unsettled by the request though you chose not to dispute it. He spared you a glance, pulling his arm away swiftly, before draping it over your upper arm as he continued to speak, an imposing gaze unrelenting in his eyes.

“I don’t care for long trials. I expect this to be wrapped up before the end of the season,” he demanded.

The older gentleman nodded solemnly, hanging on to every last word Seto spoke with a certain reverence.

Over the next few weeks, in a story which took the country by storm, this was exactly the verdict that was delivered. The trials were held at an overwhelmingly expedited speed, and the witness statements were quite obviously manipulated through your husband’s influence as Kodama, or the destroyed artificial intelligence program were never mentioned. The story read that Wakaetsu industries had been developing long range missiles that had the ability to be operated by artificial intelligence that were also being developed in house. The involvement of Kaiba Corp. and Kodama’s executive members were never specifically disclosed to the public, though as word spread, as it always did, some did draw a connection between the artificial intelligence project Kodama had abruptly destroyed and the parties involved, to the core of the controversy, however, never with any consequence.

Wakaetsu Industries’ stock prices plummeted, forcing the new board of directors to file for bankruptcy, and the nation watched as a war lord’s empire crumbled to its feet practically overnight.

Watching how the events unfolded, each page which revealed itself written in Seto’s favour, it was both remarkable and truly terrifying the extent of your husband’s power.

As aware as you were of his capabilities, it was never any less frightening witnessing it in person. It was awe inspiring and yet possessed the ability to shake you to the core.

…

Roughly a week following the commencement of the trials, you came home late one night to find your husband already home. Ending the phone call that had been occupying him, his scowl softened as his eyes shifted to you.

“Dinner?” he inquired shortly, as he walked up to you, wrapping his hands behind you and gazing into your eyes. Instinct told you that there was something oddly placed in his countenance, as if he wasn’t actually mentally present in that moment.

You answered with a nod, “you?”
He offered an uneven grunt in response.

“Are you…alright?” you questioned uncertainly, unable to overlook the edge you were sensing that caused you to feel displaced in his embrace.

“Of course I am, why would you ask that?” he asked rather testily, his voice growing from a strained whisper. Your eyes narrowed in doubt. What was inspiring your uneasiness wasn’t agitation, no, he wasn’t in a state of discomposure; rather it felt as if he was attempting to conceal something. It was the feeling one gets when a chilling breeze seeps through a closed door despite it being locked shut.

“What did you do?” you accused, feeling the question was better posed this way.

“I don’t know what you mean,” he dismissed, lightly placing his lips over yours for a fleeting moment.

Oh yeah, something was definitely up.

Sliding into bed next to him, he was watching the eleven o’clock news on his tablet. Your husband never watched the news in bed.

Wordlessly, so as to not unnecessarily draw his attention to your suspicion, you pulled yourself against his shoulder, peering over his screen.

“I didn’t think Wakamura would be transferred to the prison infirmary ward so soon,” you noted in response to the news anchor’s report. Seto wouldn’t respond, releasing a low hum in acknowledgement of your statement, continuing to watch. “Why is that breaking news?” you questioned perplexed.

“…Tetsuo Wakamura, who was transferred to the prison’s infirmary ward following surgery last week for bullet wounds sustained as a result of resisting arrest by police, was discovered dead earlier this evening, having hung himself from a railing in the infirmary bathroom. Medics were called immediately, though Wakamura was declared dead on scene. Authorities believe it was suicide and confirm there was no foul play involved…”

“What?” you practically screamed, tugging the tablet in Seto’s hands towards you as if doing so would offer you better clarity of the situation. Your eyes flicked up to your husband. His face held a disconcerting calmness, as if he had been expecting this. “You – you - did you know about this?” you asked, thoroughly shaken. You paused in consideration for a moment, “did you do this?”

“I didn’t,” he responded without missing a beat, “what motivation would I have to kill a man heading for death row?” he questioned with an eerie composure, leaning away to lay the tablet on the nightstand before enveloping you in his embrace, slightly sinking into the sheets with you. “He would have died anyway,” he declared icily.

You discernibly shivered.

“Capital punishment doesn’t always mean hanging, he could have been sentenced to life in prison,” you argued, tilting your face up to look at him.

“Exactly.”

“What?” you exclaimed dubiously, “My god you didn’t – what did you tell him that day -”

“I didn’t say I had any hand in this.”
“No but your tone implies otherwise,” you contested, skin prickling at his touch.

“Sometimes I wish you would just take my word for it, this wasn’t me,” he husked, leaning over you as he forcefully took your lips in his. “I think it’s time we put this mess behind us,” he whispered, his lips brushing yours; his breath catching in your throat.

Your eyes were open wide as if a doe's in headlights, head shaking vaguely in disbelief, trying desperately to convince yourself of his words.

His hand trailed down your chest, brushing his fingers over the thin fabric of your nightgown.

You knew what he wanted, and as you draped your hand around his neck, drawing him closer, you couldn’t be sure if you believed his words, though you accepted them.

You couldn’t be sure, and as your nightgown joined his clothes on the floor, feeling his bare skin rolling over yours, your legs wrapped around his waist, consumed by his scorching blue eyes, you were only certain that you didn’t care.

You taught yourself to look the other way. Though perhaps, the scruples you possessed in accepting events that didn’t always coincide with your moral integrity had slowly washed away over the past months, unnoticeably at first, until you were able to see eye to eye to some degree with your husband. Perhaps someday you would better comprehend his past, and that would justify the decisions he made to carry the both of you into the future.

You were uncertain still, but were only determined to be a woman who would stand by his side unwaveringly, the way he stood by yours.

You understood now what he meant when he said he didn’t expect a perfect marriage. A relationship could never hope to be perfect, because ultimately, even the most revered and seemingly flawless individuals were imperfect, they were jaded, and sometimes not morally bound the way a story book protagonist was.

You had never given much thought to marriage, but in the edges of your conscious mind, you realize you had wanted a prince charming, a knight in shining armour, the embodiment of perfection and ‘good,’ and to a degree, he was all of those things, except more; he was human.

When you wanted perfect romance, you would read a book, because in reality, humans couldn’t be defined by classical, restricting archetypes. He was a man, like any, who possessed both the good and the bad; both of which you had grown to embrace.

Ultimately, to Seto Kaiba, the man who had come into your life like a storm in late winter, the nation’s first love really grew to be his last love.

Chapter End Notes

As for the fluff, let me know if you would like me to open a new story for that, or just continue adding chapters here, whenever that may be :)

Thank you for the journey!
End Notes

Just to add some perspective, the theory behind this story, so that Kaiba doesn't seem OOC is that Kaiba is very decisive of what he wants. He wants the best of everything. The story, at least during the early chapters doesn't delve too much into detail about the reasoning behind his motives, besides the fact that he had seen something he liked and decided to 'have it.' He also doesn't entirely get the concept of how relationships work.

Let me know what you think :)