Bliss
by emeraldorchids

Summary

Paris, pregnancy, Runway, falling in love, complications, labor, babies, family, birthdays, teenagers, happily ever after...in a word, bliss.

Notes

All standard disclaimers apply. This is a work of fiction, so I've taken some liberties with the medical details. Also, I am not advocating any particular health choices, just choosing what seems right for these characters.

I hope you enjoy reading this story as much as I've enjoyed writing it. xo
“Don’t be silly, Andrea, everyone wants to be us,” Miranda said before she stepped out of the car.

As she walked up the stairs, she paused, sensing Andrea was not behind her. When she looked out towards the car, she saw her assistant standing in the plaza next to the fountain. With a groan, she turned around, pushing photographers out of her way as she stormed down the steps and ran across the street in her Prada heels.

“Andrea.”

The young woman jumped as if jolted from a daze and stared at Miranda, wide-eyed and trembling.

“Andrea,” Miranda said, reaching for her hand, “sit, just for a moment.” She took a seat on the ledge of the fountain, gently leading the brunette to sit next to her.

“Miranda, I—“

Miranda held up her hand. “I need you to stick with me for the next eight hours, do you understand? Eight more hours. And then, we can talk. I know you’re not happy, and I, well, I think I know what you must think of me.”

“Miranda, I’m sorry.”

“Please. Save your apologies. I brought you here because you are the best and brightest assistant on my team. Eight more hours, Andrea. Just give me eight more hours.”

“Okay,” she said, nodding and wiping at the tears forming in her eyes.

Miranda pulled a tissue out of her purse and took Andrea’s face by the chin. “Look up,” she said, dabbing the moisture away. She tossed the tissue back in her purse and pulled out an eyeliner pencil. “Hold still,” she said as she touched up the corners of Andrea’s eyes. “There…perfect,” she said. “Are you ready?”

“Yes,” Andrea said, standing and smoothing out her skirt. “Thank you, Miranda,” she whispered.

“For what? I don’t know what you’re talking about, Andrea. Come along,” Miranda said.

The next morning, when the Runway team was assembling at the airport gate, Miranda walked over to Andrea, who was furiously typing something on her computer.

“Andrea,” Miranda said.

“Yes, Miranda?” she asked, digging for her notepad.

“No no, I don’t need anything. Well, not like that.” Miranda held out a ticket to Andrea.

“What’s this?”

“Sit with me on the flight home. We can…talk.”

Andrea’s eyes widened. “B-but, you always have a spare seat. Y-you don’t like to sit by anyone.”

Miranda rolled her eyes. “I don’t like to sit by others when all they do is try to kiss my ass for
seven straight hours. For some reason, I don’t think you have plans of doing that.”

Andrea smiled. Maybe it was Miranda’s sense of humor, or the fact that the editor knew her better than she thought. “Okay, but only if I can get a few hours’ sleep at some point,” she said.

Miranda raised an eyebrow. “Well, you certainly don’t think I plan to spend seven straight hours listening to you. Of course,” she said, walking back towards the gate.

Neither Andrea nor Miranda spoke to each other until the plane was in the air. After the flight attendant brought them coffee, Miranda turned to look at Andrea. “What happened yesterday?”

Andrea took a slow sip of her coffee and set it down. “You mean before or after you screwed Nigel?”

“Wow, I didn’t see that coming,” Miranda said softly. “After. Wait, no. Before. What were you thinking when you showed up at my suite, looking like a hooker crawling out of a back alley? And in front of Irv Ravitz nonetheless? What happened to that jacket you were wearing anyway?”

“Yeah, that wasn’t one of my brightest moments. I, uh, went on a date. I don’t know why I’m telling you this… When I woke up, the pieces just fell into place and I wanted to warn you.”

“Pieces don’t just fall, Andrea. In this game, they are expertly placed. Was it James? Or Jacqueline? She’s been known to fancy the young women.”

“What!? No. No. I’m sorry. It was a bad decision, but it was my decision.”

“I’m touched that, even in that state, you showed up at my door.”

“Bullshit. You just want to hold it above my head. Use it against me. Keep it in your arsenal for whenever you need someone to screw over,” Andrea said.

Miranda sighed. “So that’s why you left.”

“I didn’t leave.”

“Do you mean to tell me you would have turned around if I didn’t come get you?”

“Maybe.”

“Save it, Andrea. I know you want nothing to do with me. You think I’m pathetic.”

“I didn’t say that. I just—I needed air. I needed to think about what you said. It—it was true,” she said. “And you’re far from pathetic.”

Miranda nodded and took a sip of coffee.

“It’s true. I screwed Emily like you screwed Nigel. If I would have refused to come, I would have lost my job. We do what we need to in order to survive.”

“You just didn’t want to think of yourself stooping to my level. That you were as cruel as the devil herself. That others would dispose of you so quickly without a second thought, that is, unless there’s blackmail.”

“No!” Andrea said, turning quickly to Miranda. “Really, I don’t think—I mean, it’s an honor to be compared to you.”
Miranda raised her eyebrow. “Be serious.”

“I am,” Andrea said, lowering her eyes. “You’re brilliant and sexy and powerful and really funny, and I mean that.”

“And old and vulnerable and pathetic and alone.”

“Is this about Stephen?”

Miranda cringed. “I don’t want to talk about him. We’re getting a divorce. I should have never married him.”

“Why did you?”

“I thought the girls needed a father-figure. I thought the tabloids would leave my personal life alone if I had the perfect family. It never was—perfect or a family.”

“Miranda, I don’t think you’re pathetic. The other night, in your suite, I—I didn’t know what to say. I meant that I was sorry. I wished there was something else I could do like hug you or something.”

Miranda laughed. “Oh Andrea, I was just starting to believe you. A hug? Seriously?”

“Yeah, I’m serious. I’m a hugger, Miranda, sorry,” she said, shrugging her shoulders.

After some time, Miranda spoke again. “You want to be a journalist. You’re just putting up with this job so you can get my recommendation.”

“Yes. But I’m not ‘just putting up with this job’—I take it seriously, and I want to be the best damn assistant you’ve ever had.”

“What would you have done if I didn’t come get you?”

“Umm, well, probably looked for a job at a local paper or something.”

“Andrea you can do better than that.”

“What? I—I have no experience. I haven’t written anything in a year. I need something that pays the rent.”

Miranda leaned back and looked out the window. “I have a proposition for you, Andrea. You are by far the best assistant I’ve ever had. But I can see you want more. And frankly, you deserve better than fetching my coffee.”

Andrea stared at Miranda, her mouth wide open.

“Yes, I know I don’t give compliments often. But Andrea, you are most deserving. You’re different than the other girls in the industry—you know that as well as I do.”

“So, what’s the proposition?” Andrea asked.

“Don’t worry, I’m not asking you to sell your soul. Let me help you find a worthy position.”

“And in return?”

“And in return, you remain at Runway. I will promote you to first assistant, which includes a 15%
raise.”

“What’s the catch?” Andrea asked.

“There is none, really, though you must understand that if you leave unprofessionally, or do anything that requires me to terminate you, I can no longer provide you with a glowing reference.”

“That’s it? Just keep doing my job?”

“Yes. Well, and continue to put up with me for a few more months.”

“Wait, you said until I find another ‘worthy’ position. You wouldn’t purposely hold me back, would you?”

“No. I would not. I was merely thinking that late spring is generally when we see turnover in the industry, and that you’d be more likely to find a good position then.”

“But if I find something tomorrow, I can go?” Andrea asked.

“Yes, if you’re so anxious to leave. I just don’t want you leaving out of desperation. Promise you will come talk to me if things get bad…if you ‘need air’ again?”

“Okay,” Andrea said, shaking her head. “Okay. And thank you.”

“My pleasure, Andrea.”

There was a wonderful holiday buzz in the Runway offices post-Paris and pre-Christmas. Not only was Miranda kinder to Andrea and Emily, she was actually quite cheerful.

Andrea and Miranda had decided to spend an hour after work each Tuesday and Thursday to focus on finding Andrea a job. They began by brushing up her resume, and then Miranda even offered her a few small uncredited assignments for an upcoming issue. In January, she was going to help Andrea setup some informational interviews with writers at a variety of publications.

Initially, they met in Miranda’s office at six, but Miranda soon invited her to her home so she could at least be present when the girls were home. On the Thursday before Christmas, Miranda invited Andrea to stay for dinner.

“Andy, where are you going for Christmas?” Cassidy asked.

“Oh, I’m just staying in New York in my apartment. It will be nice and quiet, you know,” she said, staring down at her plate.

Miranda looked up with concern. “Andrea, you didn’t mention you were staying in town. Will you at least be enjoying the holidays with your friends?”

“Oh, well…yeah, I’ll probably just get brunch with them.”

“Andrea…” Miranda pressured.

“I’ll tell you more later,” she said, looking Miranda in the eye. “But how about you two—are you excited about your trip to Mexico?” she asked, turning her attention to the twins.

“Yeah! We’ve been there before. The Fairmont Mayakoba is, like, my favorite place ever!” Caroline said.
“Well, I’m sure you’ll have an awesome trip. Take lots of pictures, okay?”

“Girls, why don’t you clear your plates and finish studying for your History test tomorrow, okay?” Miranda said.

When the girls left, Miranda reached across the table and took Andrea’s hand. “I would have brought you with us if I had known. Andrea, you shouldn’t spend Christmas alone.”

“It’s okay,” Andrea said, squeezing her hand. “Really, I don’t mind. We’ve got a lot of projects we can work on at the office, and I’ll be able to work on those assignments for the March issue, too.”

“Is it the time off? You know you can work from home if you need to travel back to Ohio.”

“No, it’s not that. I really don’t want to go home. My parents aren’t really talking to me, so a trip would just be a waste of money,” Andrea said. “I should get going.”

Miranda nodded and released her hand, following Andrea to the front door, helping her into her jacket. She straightened the lapels of her jacket and twisted her lip as she looked at Andrea.

“Merry Christmas, darling,” she said as she pulled the young woman into a hug.

Andrea pulled back with wide eyes. “Seriously?”

Miranda smiled and hugged her tightly. “You once told me you were ‘a hugger,’” she said, pressing a kiss to her cheek. “Well, I’m a kisser,” she said with a wink.

Andrea smiled and leaned in to kiss Miranda’s cheek. “Merry Christmas, Miranda,” she said. “I hope you enjoy the time with the girls and that you can relax a little bit, too. If there’s anything you need, you can call me.”

“Would you mind watching the townhouse—just coming by a few times? I didn’t tell Stephen we were leaving, but I don’t want him, well. Can you just keep an eye out?”

“Will do,” Andrea said as she opened the door and stepped outside.

“Hello, Miranda? What’s wrong?” Andrea said, answering her phone.

“Andrea, I just called to wish you a Merry Christmas, that’s all. Did I interrupt you?”

“No. I mean, yeah, actually. I was sleeping. It’s not even 6 AM. Why are you awake?”

“I couldn’t sleep.”

“Is everything alright?”

“Yes. I just haven’t been feeling well. I think it’s the water.”

“Don’t they say you’re supposed to only drink bottled water and not take any ice over there?”

“Yes. And you know I do that anyway. I just think some of the food must have been prepared with tap water or something.”

“Are the girls okay?”

“Yes, they’re fine. I’m fine, really.”
“Well, are you taking anything? Do you think an antacid or maybe Pepto-Bismol would help?” Andrea asked.

“I’ll pick up some Pepto today. Really, it’s nothing. I’ll be fine.”

“Okay. Can I schedule an appointment with your doctor when you return?”

“Maybe,” Miranda said. “But I’ll let you know. Really, I just called to say hello.”

“Aww, do you miss me?” Andrea said, “Wait, don’t answer that. Sorry, that was not professional.”

“Andrea, I’m calling you to chat at 6 AM on Christmas day. This is not a work-related conversation. And to answer your question, yes, I do miss you. I think the girls do, too.”

“Oh. Well, I kinda miss you, too. It’s been pretty quiet at the office. Everyone knows you’re gone, so there are no calls. There’s no book to wait around for or anything, so I’m mostly just stuck watching Serena and Emily flirt all day.”

“Well, you—what? Our Emily…and Serena!? You mean, they’re— I thought,” Miranda said, chuckling. “Here, all this time I thought Serena was with Kyle from Production.”

“Nope, they’re just good friends. Sorry, I probably shouldn’t have told you that,” Andrea said.

“Well, I can’t exactly pretend I don’t know when I see them now. Let’s just hope they keep the flirting behind closed doors when I’m back,” Miranda said. “You know, I’m happy for Emily. That girl keeps everything inside. There have been days I nearly told her to go get herself off and come back when she’s calmed down.”

Andrea laughed. “You’re joking. Oh my god, I would pay to hear you say that to her. The look on her face would be priceless.”

“Yes, it would, wouldn’t it. You know as well as I do that HR would not approve of those comments.”

“Oh right, HR. I sometimes wonder if their reach extends to Runway, though.”

“Why would you say that?” Miranda asked.

“Well, you’re always firing people for no apparent reason.”

“Andrea, did you read your contract that you signed on your first day?”

“Yes.”

“Do you remember what it says?”

“Well, it was really long. I remember it mentioning ‘the period of twelve months’ several times.”

“Yes, that is to establish that the assistant position is not at-will employment, and thereby you can actually only be terminated with cause. Because the details of the job description are so precisely laid out in the contract, with qualifiers like “promptly” and “accurately” and “efficiently,” I can generally find cause to fire an employee simply because they did not make me happy. That’s in the contract, too.”

“Wow, you’ve really thought this through.”
“Of course I have. In the case of the rest of the staff, they sign quite the opposite agreement. They are employed at-will, and I can terminate them without cause, as long as it doesn’t violate public policy, isn’t discriminatory, etc. It covers me when I need to justify breathing fresh life into the magazine, or into a particular department.”

“So, your point is that you’ve got HR in your back pocket.”

Miranda laughed. “When you put it that way, yes I suppose I have.”

Andrea heard a muffled sound on the other end of the line.

“Andrea, the girls just woke up. I have to go,” Miranda said.

“Of course. Tell them Merry Christmas from me!”

“I will. Our flight gets in Tuesday afternoon. Do you have plans for New Years Eve?”

“No. I can watch the girls if you need. I know Cara has the week off.”

“Don’t be ridiculous. I have a suite booked at the Renaissance Mariott. There’s a remarkable view of the Times Square festivities and all that, and I was wondering if you’d be interested in joining us. I’m sure the girls will fall asleep early, and depending on how our flight goes, I can’t promise that I can stay up too late, either, but… I mean, if you have other plans…”

“I’d love to join you,” Andrea said quickly.

“Oh. Good. Great.”

“You’d better get back to the girls.”

“I’ll call you Tuesday when we land. Take care,” Miranda said.

“You, too, Miranda,” she said, ending the call.

The next six days dragged on. She finished her projects at work, wrote and edited several drafts on the topics Miranda assigned her, and even setup a list of potential journalists for interviews.

“Miranda Priestly’s office,” she answered.

“Andrea, why are you at the office?”

“Miranda? Um, I was under the presumption that I was still employed,” Andrea said.

“Yes, but it’s two o’clock in the afternoon on New Years Eve. No one will be calling the office. I —I expected you to be here when we got home.”

“Oh! I’m sorry. I didn’t know. I thought you’d want time with the girls,” Andrea said as she packed her stuff. She ran down the hall to grab a sparkly dress she picked out earlier in the day.

“Andrea, I’ve been with two ten-year-olds for the past eleven days. Are you still free tonight?”

“Yes, yes, of course. What time did you want to head over?”

“The sooner the better. I’m packing a small overnight bag for myself and the girls. They likely have the streets closed off already, so whenever you can get here.”
“Do you want me to meet you there? I can be to the townhouse in twenty minutes.”

“That’s fine. I’ll see you then. Oh—bring the bottle of Veuve that’s in the wine cooler.”

“Will do. See you soon!”

“Mom! Andy’s here! Let’s go!”

Miranda came down the stairs with her bag, and Andrea couldn’t help but stare. Her hair was a little bit longer, and she had it pinned back with a sparkly barrette, clearly belonging to her daughters. Her cheeks and nose were pink and freckles dotted her cheeks. Andrea absentmindedly licked her lips.

“Andrea, are you ready?”

She grinned and smiled at Miranda. “Yes. Roy’s outside waiting. Let’s go!”

“Shotgun!” Caroline said, running out the door.

“I wanted to sit up front with Mr. Roy! That’s not fair, you only said it because I wanted to!” Cassidy cried, running after her.

Miranda rolled her eyes. “Why don’t you both sit up front with Mr. Roy? If I remember, there are two seat belts up there.”

As the girls situated themselves in the front, Andrea and Roy put their bags in the trunk. When Andrea joined Miranda in the back seat, the privacy screen was up and Miranda was rubbing her temples.

“Remind me never to fly without a nanny again,” Miranda said.

“Aw, I’m sorry. Is there anything I can do?”

Miranda shook her head. “Just let me enjoy the silence for a few minutes.”

Andrea turned and hugged Miranda, kissing her softly on her temple. “I missed you.”

Miranda sighed and rested her head on Andrea’s shoulder. “I missed you, too. A lot. And I have a new respect for what you do every day. I’m absolutely exhausted, and I was on vacation,” she said.

Andrea shifted into the corner of the backseat and tugged Miranda back against her as she wrapped her arms around her waist. “Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and relax. I’ll take care of everything.”

“Thank you,” Miranda said.

Nearly an hour later, Roy pulled into the service entrance of the hotel. “We’re here, wake up,” Andrea said, softly rousing the editor.

“I could have slept for hours,” Miranda said.

Once inside, the concierge met them and handed Andrea their room keys and another young man carried their bags up to their room for them. Andrea tipped him generously and asked that they not be disturbed, as she wanted to ensure Miranda got her rest.
The girls immediately claimed the bedroom with two queen-sized beds and a giant flatscreen TV. Andrea set her things in the main room next to the couch, and Miranda made her way to the master bedroom. It was a beautiful, luxurious room with all the amenities anyone could ask for. Andrea pulled out the hotel’s room service menu and helped the girls to pick something out for dinner.

“Girls, after dinner, why don’t you take a little nap,” Andrea said. “You’re probably tired from flying, and I know you want to be awake to see the ball drop. Beyoncé’s performing this year, I heard.”

“That sounds like a wonderful idea, Andrea,” Miranda said.

“But right now, while we wait for dinner, I want you to tell me all about your trip,” Andrea said.

After dinner, while the three Priestly women were napping, Andrea turned out the lights and pulled a chair up to the floor-to-ceiling windows. This was the perfect place to be on New Years Eve, and she expected no less from Miranda. One month ago, in Paris, she agreed to spending eight more hours with Miranda, but so much had changed. Miranda had become a real person, and they were almost friends.

Before long, Andrea’s alarm went off on her cell phone. “Girls,” she said, “time to wake up. I’m going to make some popcorn, come on,” she said.

As the girls brushed their teeth, Andrea put some popcorn in the microwave and poured two glasses of apple juice. She gently knocked on Miranda’s door, and when there was no answer, she crept inside. “Miranda, it’s almost midnight,” she said, walking over to the bed. She gently nudged the woman’s shoulder. “Miranda?”

“I’m awake,” she said, sitting up. “I’ll be out in a minute,” she said.

Andrea nodded and met the girls in the living room, where they had pulled chairs up to the window, too. Andy poured the popcorn into small bowls for them, and popped the bottle of champagne, pouring a flute for herself and for Miranda.

Miranda joined them, and the girls sat at the foot of the chaise lounge with her. When it came time for the ball to drop, they all counted down with the crowd of people below. Caroline and Cassidy grew more and more excited with each passing second.

“Five! Four! Three! Two! One! HAPPY NEW YEAR!” the girls shrieked, hugging each other, and their mother, and Andrea.

“Well, that was fun,” Caroline said, yawning, “but I’m going back to bed. Don’t wake me up before nine, okay?”

“Me too, goodnight Mom. Goodnight Andy,” she said.

Miranda bit her lip as she shook her head at her daughters. “Goodnight, girls. Sleep well,” she called after them.

Andrea followed them into the bedroom, making sure the curtains were pulled and that they were tucked in before she turned out the lights and closed the door. She returned to the window with two glasses of champagne, and sat at the edge of Miranda’s chair.

“Happy New Year, Miranda,” she said, lifting her glass. “May the year to come be filled with joy and happiness.”
“Cheers,” Miranda said, gently clinking their glasses and taking a sip. She reached over to set her glass down on the table, just as Andrea was leaning in to give her a hug and kiss.

Their lips met, and both women froze. Miranda pulled back and set down her glass.

Andrea reached up and cupped the editor’s cheek. “Miranda,” she whispered, blowing her warm breath on her lips. “It’s New Years, and I don’t see anyone else around,” she said as she brushed her lips against Miranda’s.

Miranda traced her fingers along the young woman’s face, then she slipped her hand behind her neck and closed the distance between them.

They were sitting two feet away from a glass windowpane, with over one million people in the street below. She should have been concerned, but when Andrea’s soft, plump lips were pressed against hers, she couldn’t think about anything else. Her hand found Andrea’s hip, and soon, the young woman was straddling her lap, pushing her back into the chair.

Miranda pulled away to catch her breath, and Andrea began to unbutton her blouse.

“When,” Miranda said, covering Andrea’s hand with her own. She looked Andrea in the eye. “What are we doing?” she asked.

Andrea leaned in and kissed her again, but Miranda pushed her away.

“Stop, stop,” she said. “Just, stop. Please. The girls.”

Andrea sat back, then stood and walked back to the kitchen to clean up the popcorn bowls.

Miranda walked up behind her and softly placed her hands on Andrea’s shoulders as she leaned her head against the taller woman’s back. “I’m sorry. I—” Miranda looked over at the door to the girls’ bedroom. “Come with me,” she said, tugging Andrea towards the other bedroom.

“Miranda, look,” she said, sitting on the edge of the bed. “I’m sorry. It was just a New Years thing. We can just forget it ever happened.”

Miranda sat next to Andrea and took her hand. “Do you want to forget it?”

“No really.”


Andrea turned and smiled against Miranda’s cheek, and she pressed soft kisses along her jawline.

“Andreeeeea,” Miranda moaned as she arched her neck. “I’m still married. Stop, please,” she said, getting up and walking to the bathroom. “I’m going to get ready for bed. I suggest you do the same.”

Once Miranda disappeared into the bathroom, Andrea grabbed a blanket, changed into yoga pants and a tank, and curled up on the couch.

“Andrea? Andrea?” Miranda called. She opened the bedroom door and a stream of light filled the room. “What the hell are you doing in here?” she asked.

Andrea sat up. “What? You said—”

“I told you to stop, not to sleep on the couch,” Miranda said, rolling her eyes.
Andrea quickly grabbed her things and crawled into the California king bed.

“Andrea.”

“Now what?” Andrea groaned.

Miranda crawled closer and laid her head on the young brunette’s shoulder. “Happy New Year, darling. This is going to be a good year—I can just feel it.”

The next few weeks went by rather quickly, and neither Andrea nor Miranda discussed their New Years kiss. The Runway offices were busy with a pre-spring energy, and Miranda’s schedule was crammed with run-throughs, showings, and luncheons with designers—both new and established—who wished to be featured in the spring editions. There were a few days when Miranda had multiple lunches back-to-back, even.

But, no matter how busy she was, true to her word, she continued to meet with Andrea on Tuesday and Thursday evenings to help her advance her career. Those meetings always took place at the townhouse, now, and Miranda’s daughters were always present. She claimed she wanted to maximize her time with them, even if it meant sitting in the same room, but working on separate things.

Andrea couldn’t help but wonder if Miranda was maybe afraid to be alone with her. On the weekends when the twins went to their fathers, she always had meetings and appointments, too. Andrea wanted to give her the benefit of the doubt, but couldn’t help feeling disappointed. Regardless, a few hours here and there with a busy Miranda was better than no Miranda at all.

Miranda proved to be an incredible mentor in the world of publishing. They spent time looking through some of Andrea’s own writing, with Miranda pointing out issues of style and tone, and describing circumstances when one way of saying things would be more or less appropriate than another. She helped explain the tenuous relationship between advertising and editorial, and even offered some insight regarding nonfiction essays, long form narrative, and watchdog journalism. Andrea was filled with shock and awe as she tried to absorb her mentor’s instruction. Also during the month of January, Andrea was able to reach out to several high-profile journalists who were, on Miranda’s request, happily obliged to meet with a young up-and-coming writer. She met with Christiane Amanpour, Thomas Friedman, Hubert Rauscher, and had an upcoming informational interview with Maureen Dowd. For the first time in many months she felt confident as she thought of applying for jobs again.

“Good morning Andrea, Emily…Nigel,” Miranda said as she walked into the office, a smile plastered across her face.

The three employees exchanged glasses. “Miranda, I’m sorry, but is something wrong?” Andrea asked.

“Today is Thursday, January 30th,” Miranda said in an almost sing-song voice. “Remember this date as the day on which I am no longer Mrs. Stephen Tomlinson,” she said, throwing her hands in the air and shaking her hips in a little dance.

Emily’s jaw nearly hit the floor. Andrea brought her hand up to cover her mouth as she laughed. Nigel, ever the gentleman, swooped in and led Miranda around the office while he hooted and hollered.

“How did that happen so fast?” Andrea asked as she leaned against the desk.
“Guam,” Miranda said with a shrug. “Apparently there’s no waiting period. And, it’s recognized by all fifty states!”

“Well, congratulations,” Andrea said, grinning.

“Thank you, my dear,” she said, winking at her as she made her way into her office. “And Emily, don’t look so shocked, it makes you look fat. I think you may have hated Stephen even more than I did.”

Miranda sat at her desk and began reading through her papers, but Nigel, Emily, and Andrea were still speechless after what they just witnessed.

“Hey Em, why did you hate him so much?” Andrea asked.

“Before you came,” Nigel whispered, “Stephen offered Emily a Cartier bracelet in return for her services.”

“What a dickwad,” Andrea said. She heard Miranda chuckle from her office.

“Well said. He ended up giving me that bracelet,” Miranda said, joining in the conversation. “The girls use it when they play dress-up because I’ve always refused to acknowledge it.”

“Do—do I really look fat?” Emily asked.

“Nah, well, only when you’re frowning,” Andrea teased.

“Yeah you should probably smile—it has a slimming effect, sweetie,” Nigel said, walking back to his office and shaking his head.

“Andrea?” Miranda called. “Shut the door.”

She quickly grabbed her notebook and ran into Miranda’s office, shutting the door behind her.

“Isn’t that wonderful, Andrea?” Miranda said.

“Yes, yes it is. You didn’t have to go to Guam, did you?”

“No, no. I just had to sign the papers and have them notarized. He was down there. He didn’t contest the pre-nup, and, my lawyer called first thing in the morning to tell me the news,” she said. “I didn’t want to say anything until it was finalized, since, well, I could hardly believe it was legal.”

Andrea laughed. “Whatever works. Why was he in such a hurry?”

Miranda rolled her eyes. “He got his twenty-two-year-old girlfriend pregnant, and she wants to get married. Can you believe that? He’ll be seventy-five when the kid graduates from high school, eighty at the child’s college graduation!”

“Wow,” Andrea said. “Well, I guess we should be glad she made it easier for everyone, right?”

“Did you not see how happy I was when I walked in?” Miranda asked.

“Of course,” Andrea said. “Let’s celebrate tonight.”

Miranda raised her eyebrow.
“Just dinner, and maybe some champagne or something…and if you want, you could send the girls to their father’s a little early,” Andrea said with a shrug.

“They would be very disappointed if they missed you.”

“Well, we could always wait until a better time.”

“Then I would be very disappointed,” she said with a smirk. Andrea couldn’t help but notice the blush creeping up the editor’s cheeks.

“I’ll make reservations. Anywhere in particular? Delmonico’s?”

“No, I have been going there too much lately. Let’s do Barbetta. Get that table I like. I should be finished here by 5:30.”

“Will do,” Andrea said. “See you later.”

“Andrea—wait, come here,” she said, beckoning the young woman closer.

She walked over and squatted down next to Miranda’s chair, taking her hands.

“You know I don’t make it a habit to date my employees, but,” she leaned closer, whispering in Andrea’s ear, “you’re my exception.”

Andrea gulped as a shiver went through her body. “Miranda, you can’t do this to me at work.”

“What?” she asked, letting go of her hands and turning back to her papers.

“To the newly single Miranda Priestly,” Andrea said, lifting her glass.

“And to my bastard of an ex-husband who couldn’t keep it in his pants,” Miranda added. “The first and only time I’ll ever thank him for that.”

“You know, the tabloids are much more likely to take your side, now,” Andrea said.

“Or they’ll just say I drove him away.”

“Yeah, but driving him into the arms of a twenty-two-year-old still makes him look worse. Have you told the girls?”

“A little. They obviously know that Stephen and I were divorcing, and surprisingly they were okay with that. I am hoping to wait a little before they learn of his new girlfriend.”

“Why?”

Miranda sighed. “Andrea, there is a difference between knowing you’ve been cheated on and explaining to your nine-year-old child that you’ve been cheated on. Children are quite persistent in asking ‘why.’”

“Of course. I’m sorry, I didn’t mean—“

“No, no. It’s okay. Three husbands, and each of them found something better than…than me.”

Andrea reached across the table and softly laid her hand on Miranda’s. “They didn’t deserve you.”

“How can you say that? Anyway, I think I’m the common denominator there.”
“Was James your first or second husband?” Andrea asked.

Miranda opened her mouth to speak, but closed it as the server brought their meal.

“You don’t have to answer that,” Andrea said, setting down her fork after taking several bites.”

“No, I will,” Miranda said as she dabbed her lips with her napkin. “I was starving.”

“Wait—didn’t you eat today? At lunch with Michael?”

“No, really. My stomach was bothering me. This gazpacho is delicious, though,” she said, taking a few more spoonfuls and ordering a second bottle of champagne. “James was my first husband. We were married nearly ten years, and divorced when the girls were two. Just before they turned four, I married Winthrop, but that lasted less than a year. I met Stephen shortly thereafter, and we dated for a year before we got married.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever heard anyone mention Winthrop,” Andrea said.

“Mm, yes. We disagreed on most things, but he was incredibly wealthy.”

“Miranda, I’m—I’m shocked.”

“That I married old money? Or that I just admitted it?”

“Well, both,” she said. “So, would that be Winthrop Rockefeller?”

“Well, his son. He died from leukemia last year, actually. He was a very kind man, but I think I was a bit too strong-willed for him. He was…you know, I don’t want to talk about him.”

“I’m sorry. That’s my fault. I asked,” Andrea said. “We’re supposed to be celebrating your newly single status.”

Miranda quirked an eyebrow.

“I mean, you are single, aren’t you?”

“I suppose that depends on who’s asking,” Miranda said with a smirk that was interrupted by her ringing phone. “Hello Bobbsey…yes…okay…mm-hmm…okay, Mommy loves you, too…tell your sister goodnight.” She ended the call and looked up at Andrea. Her eyelids were heavy and her lips were turned up ever-so-slightly at the corners.

“I take it they’re settled at their father’s?” she asked.

“Yes. Let’s head back,” Miranda said, waving the server over and asking for the check.

Andrea sent a quick message to Roy, and within a few minutes, they were tucked away in the backseat of the town car. Miranda’s hands desperately reached for Andrea, caressing her cheek, palming her breast, tracing along her abdomen and hips—all while humming with delight. She began kissing Andrea’s neck and chest, “Mmm, so beautiful,” she hummed.

Andrea firmly took Miranda’s shoulders and pulled her away as she pressed her index finger to Miranda’s lips. “That’s just the champagne talking,” she said. “We’ll be home in a few minutes, okay?”

Miranda nodded and rested her head against the younger woman’s shoulder. “I—I was scared. On New Years,” she said quietly. “I thought that Stephen would…well, that’s over now.”
The car pulled up to the townhouse, and Andrea took Miranda’s hand. “I don’t have to come inside, it’s okay,” she said reassuringly. “I had a lovely evening with you, Miranda.”

“I want you to come in,” she said. She squeezed Andrea’s hand, then stepped out of the car and went straight up the stairs to open the door. Once inside, Miranda turned to face Andrea who was stopped in the middle of the foyer. “Come upstairs. I want to change into something more comfortable.”

Andrea nodded and followed the woman up the stairs and into the master bedroom, where she disappeared into the bathroom. She anxiously sat on the edge of the bed, trying to decide whether she should take her shoes off when Miranda stepped out of the bathroom, bathed in a deep currant silk nightdress.

“Wow, you look amazing,” Andrea said, wrapping her arms around the woman’s waist. She softly kissed her cheek.

“I don’t feel amazing right now,” Miranda said, pushing away slightly. “I should never have had that last glass of champagne.”

“Let’s go to bed then. Do you have something I could wear?”

Miranda looked at Andrea as if she had two heads. “Of course I have something, but—I thought you wanted—tonight—“

Andrea pulled her closer and softly kissed her cheek. “I just want to be with you. We have plenty of time for—other stuff.”

Miranda smiled and walked over to the drawer, pulling out a long cotton tee. “Will this be suitable?”

Andrea nodded and went to change.

“Help yourself to anything you need in the bathroom,” she called after her.

When the brunette returned, Miranda was already in bed. She crawled into the other side and set the alarm on her cell phone before turning out the light.

“Hmm, Andrea, get over here,” Miranda said, patting the space on the mattress between them. When she scooted closer, Miranda kissed her lips gently, then draped herself over the young woman and fell asleep.

Andrea couldn’t help but smile down at the beautiful, intriguing woman in her arms.

The next morning, Andrea woke to the sound of Miranda’s vomiting echoing throughout the bedroom. She quickly made her way to the en suite and saw Miranda crouched down next to the toilet.

“Ughh,” Miranda groaned. “Never mix champagne and gazpacho.”

Andrea ran a washcloth under the faucet and handed it to Miranda as she kneeled next to her. “What can I get you?” she asked, rubbing gentle circles along her back.

“White Gatorade. There should be some in the fridge downstairs.”

In the kitchen, Andrea poured a glass of gatorade and made some coffee for herself. Looking
through the fridge, she cracked some eggs into a dish and set four slices of bread to soak while she ran back upstairs to check on Miranda.

“How are you doing?” Andrea asked, handing her the glass.

“Fine. I feel better now. I—I’m sorry I ruined everything,” she said.

“No, don’t say that. I look forward to many more dates and sleepovers with you,” Andrea said.

“Come on downstairs, I’m making french toast.”

“I’m not very hungry, but thank you,” she said.

“Well, go take a shower and get ready, and breakfast will be waiting for you if you want.”

“Shit! It’s Friday.”

“Yes--?”

“And we have to go into the office.”

“Well, I have to. I’m pretty sure you can qualify for a sick day.”

Miranda bit her lip as she seriously considered it. “Okay. When you get to the office, I’ll call and have you make an appointment with my doctor for a physical.”

“Miranda, you don’t need to make an excuse. If you’re not feeling well, no one expects you to work.”

“I know. But I do need you to make that appointment.”

“Um, don’t you think it’s just a hangover?” Andrea said.

“I don’t know. I’ve been feeling kind of sluggish since Mexico. It might be a virus or something.”

“Okay. Well, I’m going to go put the french toast into the oven, then I’ll come back upstairs and shower. Can I borrow a blouse and skirt?”

“Of course, whatever you need. And take a shower in my bathroom—less for Cara to clean next week.”

Later that evening, Miranda sent a text message to Andrea: *Working late?*

Andrea smiled and quickly typed back: *I work my ass off for you.*

Miranda chuckled and replied: *Don’t work too hard. Bring dinner with the Book? I’m starving.*


Miranda replied: *Chinese. Crab Rangoon, Cashew Chicken, Pork Fried Rice, Beef & Broccoli w/ Jasmine Rice. Thank you :-)*

Andrea smiled and called in an order to Miranda’s favorite Chinese take-out place. Within a few minutes, the Book was ready, and she soon found herself at the townhouse, bearing hot, delicious gifts.

They ate and exchanged casual conversation from Andrea’s day at the office, but after a while,
Miranda grew quiet.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” Andrea asked.

“Andrea, what are we doing?” she asked. “I’m fifty years old, divorced with two kids. I have a ridiculously demanding job, and…and…what are we doing?” Miranda pushed her plate away and began crying.

“Come on,” Andrea said, leading her off the barstool and onto the couch. She wrapped her arms around Miranda’s shoulders and pulled her close. “Now look, I don’t know what we’re doing, but it feels…good. I enjoy spending time with you, and I’m grateful that I’ve had this opportunity to see you, not just the bitch who crushes dreams. I like you, and I care about you. I hope we stay friends for a very, very long time.”

“Friends?” Miranda said as she wiped the tears from her eyes.

“For once, I need you to not be an editor. Don’t worry about the words I’m using. Friends. Lovers. Acquaintances. Whatever you want to call it. I want you in my life forever. I know we’ve tried the lovers thing a little, but circumstances always prevented anything from really happening.”

“What I’m saying is that it doesn’t matter to me. It doesn’t change how I think of you—whether we’ve slept together or not. Honestly, I’ve never had sex with another woman before, so I’m kind of nervous. Of course I think you’re beautiful and sexy and I just want to touch you and kiss you everywhere…but if you decided to get married to Sir Bartholomew Michael Worthington, I would be okay, and I would still be in your life as your best friend. Hopefully.”

“If you let me marry someone named Sir Bartholomew Michael Worthington, we are never talking again,” Miranda said, softly punching Andrea in the arm. “And for what it’s worth, I’ve never been with a woman like that, either. But I don’t know if I can be just friends. Not without trying at least once.”

“What, you don’t want to live the next five decades with all this pent-up sexual tension?” Andrea whispered in her ear.

Miranda sat up and straddled her lap. “Andrea Sachs, you are impossible, and I—“

Before she could say any more, Andrea pulled her in for a kiss, which quickly turned into an extended make-out session on the couch.

“Miranda,” she said, “how about if we tell each other what we want? Like, put your hand here, or do this or that? Maybe we can take turns and learn a little about what each other likes and dislikes. For example, I know you like my breasts.”

Miranda’s eyes widened. “How—“

“I had to use a good deal of makeup remover to scrub the lipstick off my chest last night.”

“Oh right, I’m so sorry.”

“Don’t apologize. I didn’t say I didn’t enjoy it,” Andrea said. She began to unbutton her blouse. “I’ll start.”

“Let me do that,” Miranda said. She unbuttoned and removed the blouse, then reached around to
unclasp her bra. “Wait, can I?”

“You don’t have to ask me. Just do what feels right.”

Miranda nodded and slipped the bra off, pulling Andrea’s arms above her head as she trailed kisses from her arm to her chest.

Andrea moaned as Miranda’s hands found her nipples. She reached up and untied Miranda’s robe, pushing it off her shoulders, gasping when she realized Miranda was naked beneath. Her hands explored the older woman’s body carefully, as if she were memorizing every inch.

Miranda unbuttoned Andrea’s pants—actually, they were her trousers that Andrea borrowed that morning. She moaned heartily when she realized Andrea was not wearing any underwear. The fact that they were her pants only served to heighten her arousal. “Ohh, Andrea,” she moaned, grinding herself against the woman’s thigh.

Andrea straightened out her leg, but Miranda reached back and bent it again, cupping her own breasts as she cried out in orgasm. Andrea quickly flipped their position and removed the trousers as she ran her hands over Miranda’s body. Her thighs, her hips, her breasts, her neck—she wanted it all. Andrea slowly licked Miranda from her pelvis to her nipple, pausing only for a moment to suck on her perfect breasts.

“Oh god, Andrea, please!” Miranda moaned, bucking off the couch.

“Tell me if this feels good,” Andrea said as she placed her hands on Miranda’s hips before pressing her lips to the woman’s folds. “Mmm,” Andrea hummed as she kissed and licked her juices.

“Don’t stop…Andrea…Fuck…don’t stop,” she cried out.

Andrea pressed her thumb against the woman’s clit and another orgasm raged through her body. Seeing Miranda’s exhaustion, she quickly frigged herself and collapsed next to her on the couch.

“So,” Miranda said after some time, “I’m glad we tried that, but I’m exhausted.”

“Are you okay?” Andrea asked, her voice laced with concern.

“Yes, just tired. I’m old, remember?”

Andrea smiled. “You’re perfect,” she said.

“Did you ever schedule that appointment with my doctor?”

“Yeah, sorry. It’s on your calendar at work. 7:15 AM on Tuesday. Your morning is clear, so everything should be fine.”

“What time is Miranda coming in today?” Nigel asked.

“She had an appointment at 7:15, so we weren’t expecting her until at least 9:30,” Emily said.

“Well, it’s nearly eleven-thirty. Six, did she text you?”

“Huh? What?” Andrea said. The mere mention of Miranda’s name sent a very not-safe-for-work shiver down her spine. After spending the weekend in Miranda’s bed, she didn’t imagine it would be this difficult to spend ten hours a day around the woman.
“Oh, cut it out. We all know that you two are buddy-buddy. She talks to you. Any idea what’s taking her so long? I need a decision on Testino,” Nigel said.

“Uh, no. I haven’t—“

“Nevermind,” Emily said. “Roy just texted that she’s on her way up. Really, Andrea, do try and make yourself useful around here!”

“Cut it out, she’ll be here in a minute,” Nigel said, leaning against Andrea’s desk, safely out of firing range.

Miranda approached the outer office slowly, much slower than her usual pace. She stopped between the desks, and Emily helped her out of her coat. And she just stood there.

“Miranda?” Andrea said with concern. She was suddenly terrified that she had received terrible news from the doctor.

Miranda turned and looked at her with tears in her eyes.

“Jesus, Miranda, you’re scaring us. Did everything go okay at the doctor?” Nigel asked.

Miranda bit her lip and nodded as tears streamed down her cheeks. “I’m fine. I’m more than fine, actually,” she said. She brought her hand up to cover her mouth as she started laughing hysterically.

“Miranda, what is it?” Andrea asked.

She shook her head in disbelief. “I’m pregnant.”

For the second time in one week, the three employees exchanged expressions of shock.

“P-pregnant? A baby?” Andrea asked.

Miranda leaned against Emily’s desk and nodded, “I was shocked, too. Still am, clearly.”

“Here, come sit, Miranda,” Nigel said, leading her to the sofa in her office. “Andrea will bring you some decaffeinated coffee,” he said, turning and glaring at her.

“Right. Of course,” she said, jumping into action and sprinting out the door.

“Nigel, really. I’m okay,” Miranda said. “We have a lot of work to do before August. At least it explains why I’ve been so tired lately. I’m going to try and leave by 6 PM.”

Nigel nodded and stepped away.

“Nigel, I know you’re still upset about James Holt, but trust me. Think of this—now, you’ll have the opportunity to do several issues on your own.”

“Miranda, I—“

“Nigel, I need you for the next six months. If you can’t give me that, let me know right now.”

“I can, and I will. Six months and more. You’re one of my most longtime best friends, and you’ve been my mentor for the past eighteen years,” he said. “Whatever you need.”

Miranda leaned over and kissed him on the cheek, then pulled him in for a hug.
“Since when do you hug?” Nigel asked.

“Oh, uh, um,” Miranda stammered. “I guess it’s just those hormones, huh?” she said with a shrug. But there was no denying that Nigel saw the blush creeping up her face.

“Who’s the father?” he whispered in her ear.

“Nigel, I would have expected a bit more tact from you. That is none of your business.”

Andrea ran in, out of breath, with a fresh decaf latte and quietly set it on Miranda’s desk.

“Miranda, when you have a second, I need an answer on Testino,” Nigel said.

“Oh, I saw that note in the car. Let’s go with the plum-to-orchid transition, don’t you think?”

“That was the one I was thinking, too. I’ll let them know,” he said, marching back to his office.

“Andrea? Come back here and close the door.” Miranda said.

She did, and she walked closer, her eyes fixed on the ground.

“Andrea, is something wrong?”

“No,” she said, shaking her head. During the few minutes she spent getting coffee, she realized two things: first, that Miranda’s relationship with Stephen apparently wasn’t over, and second, that the bliss following this past weekend would be very short-lived. “Was there something you needed?” she asked.

“Have a seat,” Miranda said. She walked around her desk and sat opposite her. “Andrea, darling, you look like you’ve been crying.” Miranda reached out for her hands. “What happened?”

“It’s nothing, please. I have a lot of work to do today,” she said. The last thing she wanted to do was complain. She should have known Miranda would tire of her and find something else in a heartbeat.

“Okay, I won’t push you,” Miranda said, “but, will you at least talk to me tonight?”

Andrea’s eyes widened.

“You are still coming over, right? The girls were disappointed to know they missed you this weekend.”

“Sure. I’ll be over when the Book is ready.”

“Actually, that reminds me. I’m going to talk to Roger. Donna was telling me about this new software where I would be able to view a digital edition and actually make notes with a stylus or put virtual post-its. I’m going to see if he can set that up—it should save everyone some time, and hopefully we can get that setup today.”

“Oh, okay. So, 6:30 then?”

“Yes, Andrea, that’s fine,” Miranda said, gently kissing her hand. “Do you want to see the sonogram?” Miranda asked. “I’m already eleven weeks.”

Andrea shook her head as she did the math. At least it felt a little better knowing that this happened before Paris, and may have well been over before Miranda showed interest in her. “Maybe later,”
she said. She was clearly spending too much time thinking about this. The sooner she found a new job, the better.

Miranda sat back and pulled her hands away. “Andrea, darling, this isn’t like you,” she said. “Talk to me.”

“Later. Tonight, okay?”

“Okay,” Miranda said. “Is there something else going on—you, your family? You would tell me if there was anything serious, right?”

Andrea flashed a fake smile. “Everything’s fine. Don’t worry. Stress isn’t good for the baby,” she added.

When Andrea stood, Miranda quickly followed her, firmly taking her wrist and dragging her into the corner of her office that was out of view of the doorway. Miranda practically pinned her against the wall. “Andrea, this is one of the happiest moments of my life and you’re throwing a tantrum. Tell me what is going on,” she said.

Andrea started to cry. “I’m sorry,” she said, covering her face with her free hand. “I’m not trying to spoil your moment. I just—things were going good, you know? With the divorce, I thought we could—and I was willing to wait—I just—I’m sorry. I’m happy for you, really. Congratulations.”

“Is this jealousy rearing its ugly head, Andrea? Are you concerned that you will have to share my attention? Honestly, I expect that from Cassidy but I would have never thought you—“

“No! Not that. I just—things were good with us. It felt like we were going somewhere, didn’t it?” Andrea said.

“Yes. And it is going somewhere unless something has changed in the past two days? Please don’t tell me that you want nothing to do with a pregnant fifty-year-old.”

Andrea’s eyes widened. “But—what about Stephen?”

“What on earth does he have to do with anything?”

“Isn’t—isn’t he the—“

“The father? No,” Miranda said with a chuckle. “Most definitely not.”

“But then—how—?”

“Andrea, you know perfectly well how babies are made. I have no intention of disclosing the father. I’m sorry, but that is all I will say about it,” she said. “Now, if you will get over your imaginary jealousy, will you enjoy this moment with me?”

Andrea smiled and hugged Miranda tight. “I’m sorry, yes, yes. Show me the sonogram,” she said. “And wait, I thought you had an appointment with your regular doctor.”

“I did,” Miranda said. She smiled and walked back to her desk, fishing the photo out of her bag. “She sent me across the street to my obstetrician, which is why I was gone so long. Here,” she said, smiling proudly as she handed the small paper to her.

“Miranda, this says ‘Twin A’ and ‘Twin B’—is this—?”

“Yes. It’s twins.”
Andrea softly brushed her finger across the tiny photograph. Turning to Miranda, she cupped her cheek and kissed her slowly.

Miranda pulled away with a glassy look in her eye. “Andrea, I—“

A knock at the door startled both women. Andrea quickly wiped the smudged lipstick off Miranda’s lip, then took a few tissues and blew her nose, running out of the office and making it look like Miranda made her cry.

“No, Miranda, I have Mario on the phone,” Emily said.

“No, put him through,” she said, returning to her desk.

That evening, as Andrea was bringing the dry-cleaning to Miranda’s, she tried to picture what a life with Miranda would actually look like. A knock on the town car’s window brought her out of her daydream.

“No, Andy, Mom wants to know why you’re still out here,” Caroline said.

Andrea smiled and opened the door. “I was daydreaming, sorry.”

Caroline shrugged and marched back up the stairs, Andrea close on her heels.

“Sweetie, where’s your mom?” she asked after hanging up the dry-cleaning.

“Up in her office, come on,” Caroline said, grabbing her hand and tugging her upstairs.

“Oh, there you are,” Miranda said, standing from her desk. “Girls, why don’t you go finish your homework in your rooms. Mommy needs to talk to Andrea for a little bit.”

The girls grabbed their backpacks and headed upstairs while Miranda joined Andrea on the recently vacated sofa. “Where were we this afternoon? Before Emily interrupted us?” she asked, reaching up and brushing Andrea’s cheek.

Andrea smiled and leaned into her palm. “I think you were telling me how happy you were,” she said.

“Ah, yes, and your jealousy was showing,” she said with a smirk.

“I know, I’m sorry. Let’s change the subject,” she said. “How are you doing?”

Miranda leaned back against the sofa and crossed her arms across her abdomen. “I’m feeling great,” she said. “I’ve been so tired lately, and, well now,” she shook her head, “I feel really good. And I’m really excited for this pregnancy.”

Andrea smiled. “What did the doctor say? Did she do a full exam?”

“Well, she was a little less thrilled because of my age and my difficulties with the girls, but she said everything seemed perfect. Both embryos measured 1.5” crown-to-rump.”

“What happened with the girls?”

“I wasn’t ready. James and I were practically separated. It was an exciting but very busy time for the magazine. I basically tried to ignore the fact that I was pregnant until my doctor admitted me to the hospital for mandatory bed rest. I just wasn’t ready. Every one of my symptoms was simply an
inconvenience,” she said. “But once those tiny, tiny babies were born, I regretted not taking better
care of myself.”

“Were they premature?”

“Yes. At thirty-one weeks, and they were very small, just over four pounds. Cassidy was my ‘twin
B’ and it was something about the way she was twisting around. She had wrapped the cord around
herself and she was in distress. They did an emergency cesarean, and the girls were on respirators
and feeding tubes for weeks. I couldn’t even hold them. They were in the hospital for the entire
length of my maternity leave. I can’t help but think if I did it differently…”

“Don’t think like that, Miranda. They turned out perfect,” Andrea said.

“I know. I know. Dr. Assaf reminded me of all the risks I face with this pregnancy, and I think she
was even trying to ask if I wanted to terminate it, since I still have a few weeks.” She paused for a
few minutes. “Do you think I’m being selfish? Putting my own life at risk for this?”

“You’re—you’re asking me?”

Miranda nodded.

“I don’t know. I think you have every right to want these babies, and I want you to know I’ll
support you, whichever you decide.”

Miranda leaned her head on Andrea’s shoulder and grasped her hand. “I appreciate that, but
honestly, I don’t see a decision. There are two healthy babies in here,” she said, cupping her
abdomen, “and I would do anything for my children, you know that.”

“I do. And I think that doctors sometimes scare us with all the possible complications just to cover
their asses.”

“Andrea, have I ever told you how smart you are?” Miranda said.

“Actually,” Andrea laughed, “you did.”

Miranda’s eyes widened as she remembered. “Darling, I should never have said that. You are not
‘fat’—you’re perfect. In a few months, though, I think I’ll be falling into that category.”

“You? Never. Maybe more voluptuous, sexier, and luscious, but never fat.”

Miranda chuckled and pulled Andrea’s chin closer. “I have a feeling you’re going to need to keep
telling me that for the next few months,” she whispered before closing the distance between their
lips.

The following week, Miranda’s excitement over the pregnancy had died down some, but there was
still an anxious buzz in the air. Emily was busy ensuring Miranda’s diet included enough calcium,
vitamin D, and folic acid, while Andrea continued to work on her writing samples and network
during her down time.

The book was now being delivered electronically to Miranda’s iPad every evening, and the dry-
cleaning was delivered every Monday afternoon. Miranda was working from home on Fridays and
spending Wednesday mornings with her yoga instructor. She had also reached out privately to
several designers about a Spring/Summer maternity collection.
On Friday morning, February 14th, there was a knock at Miranda’s front door.

“Delivery for Ms. Priestly,” the man said. But Miranda couldn’t see him, because he was hiding behind eight dozen roses.

“Just put them in here,” Miranda said, showing him to the dining room table. She signed for the delivery and closed the door. Looking through them, they were arranged into four pre-cut bouquets: yellow roses from Cassidy, pink roses from Caroline, a beautiful mix of multi-colored roses from Andrea, and white roses from ‘A & B’.

The gesture brought tears to Miranda’s eyes, and she went straight to the phone to call Andrea.

“Hi, Miranda.”

Miranda sniffled. “Andrea, thank you,” she said. “They’re beautiful.”

“I’m glad you like them. The girls helped me pick out the colors. I’ve missed you lately.”

“Same here,” she said. “I wish we had more time when the girls aren’t home, but as it is, I only see them for about four hours a day during the week. And it takes everything out of me to stay awake with my precious girls…”

“Wait, are you crying?”

“Yes. Andrea, you warm my heart to no end. You didn’t say anything to the girls about the babies, did you?”

“No, no no. That’s not my place. They think the white ones are from Patricia.”

“Okay. I want to wait another month before I say anything. Darling, come over and work from the townhouse for the rest of the day,” she said.

“I’m having lunch with Maureen Dowd at 12:30, but I can come afterwards,” Andrea said.

“Oh right, I forgot. That’s fine. Don’t rush your lunch, I’ll be here. What are you wearing?”

“Calvin Klein pre-fall charcoal pencil skirt, emerald silk Theory blouse, and Tory Burch black flats. I might add a skinny leopard belt.”

“Excellent choices. Go with the Burberry belt instead of the one from J. Crew,” Miranda said. “Maureen would be put off by anything bordering on outrageous. Simple accessories?”

“Gold Kors bracelet watch, nude nails, my grandmother’s claddagh ring, and my Me&Ro pendant necklace.”

“I can’t wait to see you. Darling, I’m so proud of you. I don’t know if I’ve said this before, but I feel like you’ve grown so much since you first started. You are quite an exceptional young woman.”

“Thank you, Miranda. That means a lot coming from you. But I’ve got to go run some errands before lunch. Need anything?”

“No, I’ll see you this afternoon.”

Around 2:30 PM, Andrea arrived at the townhouse, her Kate Spade messenger bag nearly busting at the seams.
“Andrea?” Miranda called from the study.

“Yes, it’s just me.”

“How did lunch go?”

“It was great. I think she really liked me. She introduced me to Bill, her editor who was also at Pastis. Are you in the study?” Andrea asked as she made her way up the stairs.

“No, I’m in bed.”

Andrea rushed into the bedroom, and was relieved to see Miranda propped up on some pillows, playing with her iPad. “I brought you some stuff,” she said, tossing her bag on the bed.

“First let me look at you,” Miranda said. “Turn around.”

Andrea pirouetted next to the bed for Miranda.

“Come here,” Miranda said, tugging her to the bed. She snaked her hand behind Andrea’s head and unpinned her hair before kissing her. As their lips were locked, Miranda’s hands found the other woman’s hips and nudged her towards the bed. Without breaking their kiss, Miranda maneuvered Andrea onto her back. “I might not be able to do this much longer,” she said, “and darling, I want to taste you so badly.”

Andrea’s eyes widened and she shuddered.

“First, let me take these clothes off you. You look too much like a naughty secretary, and, well,” Miranda chuckled, “that’s a bit too close to the truth right now.”

Andrea moaned as Miranda cupped her breast through her bra. “I’m only…” she panted, “naughty…for you.”

Miranda made quick work of her clothing and slipped out of her own.

Andrea couldn’t help but notice how tightly those drawstring lounge pants had been pulled against her abdomen. When she kneeled, Andrea noticed the growing bump, though she didn’t have a chance to say anything once Miranda’s fingers began pumping in and out of her dripping folds. “Oh god, Miranda!” she cried.

Miranda slithered down her body until she was laying on her stomach, between the woman’s legs. She held her folds open with one hand and began anxiously lapping at her juices with her tongue, moaning and humming in delight.

Andrea was assaulted with the dual sensations of Miranda’s lips and the arousing sounds she was making. She reached down and threaded her fingers through Miranda’s hair, which only elicited a louder moan from the silver-haired woman.

As Miranda’s licking grew more desperate, Andrea felt her nose bumping into her clitoris, and she began thrusting her hips wildly, searching for contact.

“Tell me what you need,” Miranda purred.

“My clit, oh god, please!”

Miranda repositioned herself, throwing Andrea’s legs over her shoulders. With her right hand, she reached down to rub herself while her lips and tongue attacked Andrea’s engorged clitoris. She
sucked it out of its hood, and softly bit down until she felt Andrea’s body quaking in orgasm.

She pulled herself up, running her hands along the young woman’s body until she reached her shoulders. She straddled her lap and kissed her as her muscles erupted in pleasure. Miranda peeled the bunched-up sheets from Andrea’s hand and placed her hands onto her own hips. “Touch me,” Miranda whispered as she licked the shell of Andrea’s ear.

Andrea ran her hands up and down Miranda’s back, then reached around and palmed her breasts.

“Ohhh, no, no,” she gasped, “not there. They’re too sensitive.”

“Sorry,” Andrea whispered, pressing several light kisses to her neck. She moved her hands away, cupping her buttocks, and then the back of her thighs.

“Andrea, I’m so close,” Miranda said, panting in her ear.

She slipped her hand between their bodies and applied pressure at Miranda’s juncture. After a few quick thrusts, Miranda was choking out her orgasm into Andrea’s neck.

They laid like that for several minutes, Miranda sprawled out on top of Andrea—sweaty, sticky, and thoroughly satisfied.

Andrea gently nudged Miranda off, and turned to her side, entwining their legs. “Is this okay for the babies?” she asked as she pressed her palm to Miranda’s belly.

“Mm-hmm. The doctor said as long as I didn’t feel any pain, it was fine. I remember with the girls, once I popped, it was impossible to lay on my stomach,” Miranda said. She turned onto her back and pulled Andrea on top of her, locking her feet behind Andrea’s thighs. “It was also very uncomfortable for anyone to be on me like this.”

Andrea tried to push her weight off Miranda, but the woman tugged her close.


Andrea nodded and kissed Miranda before laying her head on her shoulder. They woke to the sound of Andrea’s phone, and out of habit, Andrea jumped and ran for it.

Miranda chuckled. “I hope you know I’m the only one I expect you to do that for.”

Andrea shrugged. “I’m technically still working this afternoon,” she said, answering the call.

“Andrea! Where have you been?!?”

“Hey Em, I had a lunch meeting, then Miranda asked me to deliver a few items to the townhouse.”

“Bloody hell! Why didn’t you tell anyone? Are you there? Miranda’s not answering her phone.”

“Emily, calm down. Yes, I’m here, and yes, Miranda is here, too. She’s reviewing some of the advanced tablet functionality,” Andrea said with a shrug.

Miranda smiled and gave Andrea a thumbs-up.

Andrea covered the mouthpiece on the receiver. “Miranda, Nigel wants to know if you saw the email from Testino’s people.”
“Give me that,” Miranda said, taking the phone from Andrea.

“Emily, why is it so difficult for you to manage a simple task. I asked not to be disturbed this afternoon, so no, I did not see the email from Testino’s people, nor do I have any intention of reading an email from anyone other than Mario himself. That’s all,” she said, ending the call.

Andrea laughed as Miranda put the phone on the nightstand. “Shower?”

Miranda nodded and followed Andrea into the bathroom. She was pleasantly surprised when Andrea took the initiative and began to wash her body before doing her own, although Miranda couldn’t help but moan in pleasure as the young woman’s delicate hands made their way across her sensitive skin.

“Andrea,” she moaned. “How do you do this to me?” She rolled her head along her neck.

Without saying a word, Andrea shampooed and conditioned her hair, and rinsed it out. She did the same to her own, then pulled Miranda under the spray again as she softly cupped her breasts and trailed kisses down her neck. She pressed Miranda back against the marble tile, and the woman lifted her leg around Andrea’s hip. Andrea reached down and began thrusting two fingers inside her until she felt the woman’s muscles gripping her tightly. When she recovered, Andrea again washed between her legs, then led her out of the shower, wrapping her tightly in a towel.

Once they dried off, Miranda sat on the edge of her bed while Andrea changed into leggings and a tee. “Andrea,” she said as she wrapped her arms around her abdomen, “I don’t have anything to wear.”

“Well, I’m all for you wearing nothing at all,” she said with a wink, “but don’t worry. I brought something for you,” she said. “Here,” she said, picking up her messenger bag from the floor. She pulled out two pairs of stretchy pants, a skirt, two wrap blouses, and a jar of cream.

“Until the designers finish their collections for you,” Andrea said, handing her a pair of pants. “These have a looser waistband, and those skirts should fasten below your belly.

Miranda picked up the items and examined them. “Where did you find these?”

“Don’t hate me,” Andrea said. “Target.”

Miranda glared at her, but her expression wavered and a smile formed on her lips. “Thank you,” she said.

Andrea smiled. “I’m going to dry my hair,” she said, heading back into the bathroom. When she returned, Miranda was dressed, sitting indian-style on the bed, holding the jar of cream in her hands.

“Andrea,” she moaned. “How do you do this to me?” She rolled her head along her neck.

“Andrea,” she moaned. “How do you do this to me?” She rolled her head along her neck.

“Do you think I look too old?” Miranda asked.


“Why did you bring this?” she asked, holding the jar. “It’s anti-aging, wrinkle cream.”

“I read it’s really good at preventing stretch marks,” Andrea said. “I’m sorry. I snagged the sample from the beauty department. It’s made with platinum, and there’s something about the way it bonds with human skin, it keeps it toned and moisturized, even with changes in humidity.”

“Yes, I’ve heard about this,” she said. “I’m already seeing some stretch marks on my breasts,”
Miranda said. “Is this your way of saying you want them gone?”

“Oh my god, don’t even start,” Andrea said, taking the jar from her hands. “This is my way of saying I want to slather thousand-dollar cream all over your gorgeous, sexy body,” Andrea said.

Miranda grinned and lifted off her shirt, then unclasped her bra. “Well, I suggest you start here,” she said, leaning back against the pillows. “This area is in dire need of your attention.”

Sunday evening, Andrea was watching the news when her phone rang.

“Hi Miranda,” she said.

“Andrea, how are you?”

“Good. Is everything okay?”

“Yes. I have a doctor’s appointment on Friday,” Miranda said. “I was wondering if you’d like to join me.”

“Really?”

“Yes. I mean, it’s nothing special. It’s still too early to tell the babies’ sex or anything, but it’s the thirteen-week mark, and the doctor wants to monitor their growth closely,” she said.

“Yes, I’d love to come, Miranda.”

“I don’t want you to feel obligated or anything, I just thought—“

“Miranda, listen to me,” Andrea said. “I want to be there. I am so grateful that you’re sharing this journey with me. I will be there for all of it if you’ll have me.”

Miranda sniffled. “Andrea, I don’t know what to say.”

“Don’t say anything,” she said, wishing she was there to hug Miranda. “Don’t say anything at all.”

“Miranda, please calm down,” Andrea said as they sat, waiting in a room at Dr. Assaf’s office.

Miranda stopped bouncing her leg.

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

She nodded. “I’ve always been like this,” she said, rolling her eyes as she began playing with her hands in her lap.

“Look at me,” Andrea said. She took Miranda’s face in her hands and kissed her for much longer than was appropriate in a public setting. “Calm down. Okay?”

Miranda smiled and took a deep breath. “Okay.”

“Miranda, how are you today?” the nurse asked. “Come on back.”

They followed her back into a large exam room, where Miranda climbed onto the table and offered her left arm for some blood samples and her right arm for blood pressure.

“Miranda, your blood pressure is very high,” the nurse said.
Andrea gently tapped Miranda on the shoulder and raised her eyebrow.

Miranda sighed. “It happens at doctor visits,” she said.

“Okay, well we will re-check your pressure before you leave.”

Miranda nodded, and Dr. Assaf walked in.

“Miranda, how have you been doing?”

“Great. I mean, I really feel wonderful,” she said.

“Nutrition, rest…everything is good?”

“For the most part, I’m adhering to the diet your nutritionist gave me,” Miranda said.

“Good. And you’re resting?”

“I’m working no later than six, and going to bed when my nine-year-old daughters do. I’m working from my sofa on Fridays, and working on light exercises with my yoga instructor weekly.”

“Okay, but you may need more rest. I know you have a demanding career, but please listen to your body. If you feel like taking a nap in the middle of the day, do it. And if your nap turns into eight hours of sleep, that’s okay.”

Miranda looked over at Andrea. “Hmm, this should be fun,” she said. “Yes, doctor. I will be sure that I don’t push myself. I remember how difficult it becomes to sleep later on.”

“Excellent,” she said as she gently applied pressure to the side of Miranda’s belly. “What about the morning sickness?”

“It’s gone. I don’t need the medication anymore.”

“Good, good. So you’re officially at thirteen weeks and four days today. We’ll do your next appointment at sixteen. Now, let’s have a look,” she said, pulling the ultrasound machine over.

“Have you felt any quickening?” she asked.

“Yes,” Miranda said with a smile, “I just noticed it a few days ago.”

“Wonderful. So, by now, the babies have fully functioning kidney systems. They each weigh just under one ounce, and in a few days, their spinal columns will be visible,” Dr. Assaf said. “Oh look, this one is sucking its thumb,” she said, pointing to the screen.

Miranda grinned and dabbed at the tears in her eyes.

“Everything looks fine today, Miranda. I’d like to see you every two weeks to monitor the babies’ growth and your health as well. Do you have any questions for me?”

Miranda softly chewed on her lower lip. Andrea reached up and took her hand. “When will—I mean, when can—“ Miranda sighed. “When will we know if they’re going to make it?”

“Miranda, right now you’re three days short of the second trimester. With each day, the babies’ chances of survival increase. While we like to see all pregnancies go to term, that’s not always an option with multiples or older mothers. I want you to know that we will do whatever is necessary to keep you healthy and to help you bring two beautiful, healthy children into this world.”
Miranda nodded and squeezed Andrea’s hand. “So I should plan on forty weeks?”

“Let’s aim for thirty-six. Taking care of yourself can really help, Miranda. On your next visit, we can talk more about the different screening tests we can perform, including an amniocentesis. The NT reading from today is showing approximately 1.1 for each baby, which is perfect, Miranda. Relax, and spend the next four weeks taking care of yourself. We’ll do the full anatomy scan, and discuss a level 2 ultrasound at your eighteen-week appointment, okay?”

Miranda thanked the doctor, and soon she and Andrea were back in the town car. Leaning forward, she raised the privacy glass. “Would you like to come over this weekend?” Miranda asked.

“Come over…for lunch or something?”

“Sure, but I was thinking more so for the entire weekend.”

“But, aren’t the girls home this weekend?”

“Yes, but they have a lot of homework and—I just kind of want you there when I tell them about the babies.”

Andrea smiled. “Yes, of course,” she said, kissing her softly on the cheek.

As they rode in silence the rest of the way, Andrea couldn’t help but feel a tiny pang of disappointment. As much as she loved Miranda and loved those unborn children as her own, they still weren’t. Miranda had been feeling the babies kicking and hadn’t said anything for days.

“Andrea?”

“Oh, sorry. What?”

“I asked if you needed to get anything from the office,” she said.

“Yeah, actually. There’s some stuff I have to do. Did you want me to come by tonight or tomorrow?”

“Whenever,” Miranda said. “I’ll probably tell the girls as soon as they get home from school.”

Andrea nodded. The car came to a stop at Runway, and she leaned over, kissing Miranda on the cheek before stepping out and heading back up to work.

“Hey Andy, this letter came for you earlier,” Serena said. “I signed for it—it looked pretty important.”

“Thanks,” she said, quickly opening the envelope.

“Well? What is it?” Emily asked.

Andrea’s eyes quickly scanned the page. “Umm, a job offer. New York Times.”

“Wow, that’s good,” Serena said.

“You’re leaving? Now? Before the baby comes?” Emily asked.

Andrea smiled and tucked the letter away so she could show Miranda later. “Maybe, it depends. I’ve been talking to a few different publications, but this one is actually for another assistant position, which I really don’t want.”
“Oh but come on, that job will be a piece of cake compared to what you’re doing now,” Emily said.

“Yeah, and I get bored easily. I want to write, so I guess that means you’re stuck with me for a while longer.”

“Andrea, I never thought I’d say this, but I will miss you. You have this calming effect on Miranda as if—” Emily’s eyes widened and her eyes darted between Serena’s and Andrea’s. “Are you…no. You can’t be…can you?”

“What??” Serena asked.

“She—she’s—“

“Emily, so help me god, do not say another word!” Andrea said. Once Emily’s lips were firmly shut, she continued. “I am neither confirming nor denying that. Miranda and I are sort of friends. She’s been my mentor in finding a new job, so I see her outside of work sometimes.”

Serena’s eyes widened. “Wait, you mean—you and Miranda?”

Andrea rolled her eyes and buried her head on her desk. This was going to be a very long afternoon.

At 6:30PM, Andrea climbed the steps to the townhouse, and before she could fish the key from her bag, Miranda opened the door.

“Hi.”

“Hi, how was the rest of your day?” Andrea asked, setting her bags in the foyer. She had Roy stop at her apartment on their way so she could get some clothes and toiletries.

“I took a nap,” Miranda said, “and I slept for four hours! Honestly, I would probably still be sleeping if the girls hadn’t come home.”

“Well, that’s good, though. Dr. Assaf would be very happy to hear that. Did you tell them?”

“I did. They weren’t as excited as I had hoped, but Caroline is eager to make sure I’m okay. Cassidy’s eyes were glued to my belly.”

“Is this what you were wearing?” Andrea asked, gesturing at the lycra-blend Lululemon long sleeve tee.

“Yes. It’s comfortable. I’ll still try to conceal it for a while at work, but the tabloids will figure this out sooner or later,” she said. “Would you mind just chatting with the girls for a bit? I want to make sure they’re okay with everything. They started asking questions about the father, and I don’t think they were satisfied with my answer.”

“Of course. What did you tell them?”

“That the baby doesn’t have a father.”

Andrea fought the urge to roll her eyes. “They’re too old to fall for that, but maybe a little too young for the truth.”

“And what, exactly do you think ‘the truth’ even is?” Miranda asked.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it like that.”
“How did you mean it, then? Are you trying to tell me what I should tell my children?”

“No. I’m sorry. I’ll go up and check on them. Are they in their rooms?”

“Yes, watching a movie, I think.”

“I’ll go say hello,” Andrea said. “Oh, and remind me—I have two things to tell you,” she called behind her.

Upstairs, she softly knocked on the girls’ room. “Hey Cass. Hey Caro,” she said.

“Hey Andy. Why are you here tonight? It’s Friday,” Cassidy said.

“I know. I just thought I’d spend some time with you and your mom this weekend. Is that okay?”

“Sure.”

“Cool. What are you watching?”

“Snow White,” Caroline said. “Cass doesn’t remember ever seeing it, but I know we’ve watched it, like, a hundred times.”

“Can I stay and watch a little? I haven’t seen it since I was a little girl,” Andrea said.

“Sure,” Cassidy said, moving over so she could fit on the bed with them. “Andy, is Mom okay?”

“Yes, sweetie, she’s fine. Why?” Andrea said.

“She told us about how she’s having a baby.”

“And she said it makes her tired and hungry and whiney.”

“Your mother said that? That she’s ‘whiney?’” Andrea asked.

“Yeah,” Caroline giggled. “I know.”

They sat in silence for a few minutes, watching the movie. When it finished, Andrea looked down and noticed Cassidy staring off into space. “Cass, whatcha thinking about?”

“Mom says ‘we’ now to mean you and her,” she said.

Andrea thought about that for a minute. “Yeah, I guess she does sometimes. It’s just a pronoun.”

“No, Cass is right. She says that all the time now. Before it used to be ‘Mommy and Andrea’ or something,” she said mimicking her.

“She must see me as a close friend now or something,” Andrea said, with a shrug.

“Do you love her?” Cassidy asked.

Andrea thought before answering. She didn’t want to disclose anything Miranda wasn’t ready to. “Of course, your mom is one of my best friends, and I care about her a lot,” she said, “just like I care about you two a lot.”

“Andy?” Cassidy asked. “Are you going to leave us when you aren’t working for Mom anymore?”

“No way,” Andrea said. “In fact, you’ll probably see me around even more because your mom and
I will have so much to catch up on, and I’ll definitely want to see your new brother or sister,” Andrea said, careful not to mention that Miranda was expecting twins. “Are you okay with that?”

Both girls nodded eagerly, and Andrea wrapped them in a giant hug.

“Your mom loves you both so much, do you know that?” Andrea said.

“Andy, do you love us?”

“Yes, very much so. I don’t have any kids or nieces or nephews or anything, so I’m really glad to have you two in my life,” she said.

“What about when the baby is born?” Cassidy asked. “Will you be its big sister, too, or, like, will it call you ‘Mom?’”

Andrea shrugged. “I hope that someday I can be like the baby’s second mom, but that’s for your mom to decide.”

“Hi, did I miss anything?” Miranda said from the doorway. Her eyes were sparkling as she looked at Andrea.

“Mom, are you feeling okay?” Caroline asked.

“Yes, sweetheart, I’m fine. I hope Andrea kept you company?”

They nodded.

“Okay, girls, I want to talk to you about something,” she said as she reached for Andrea’s hand.

“So you know how, when a mommy and a daddy love each other, they can have a baby, right? Well, this baby,” she said, putting her hands on her belly, “doesn’t have a daddy like you do. This baby just has a mommy, okay?”

“So, Stephen’s not their dad, right?” Caroline asked.

“No,” she said. Miranda held her breath, hoping this would not become a game of twenty questions.

“Well,” Andrea said. “I’m hungry. How about you?”

Both girls eagerly nodded.

Miranda smiled. “Can you set the table for the four of us? Cara made some chicken and pasta thing today, so I just have to reheat it. I’ll be down in a minute,” Miranda said.

Once the girls left, Andrea leaned over and kissed Miranda on the lips.

“What was that for?”

“To apologize for what I said when we were in the foyer,” Andrea said. “How long were you standing there?”

“Mmm,” she hummed, hugging Andrea tightly, “long enough to hear that I’m your best friend and that you care about me a lot.”

Andrea blushed, and Miranda took her hand, entwining their fingers. “I didn’t know what to tell
them. I didn’t know if you were ready to explain…”

“Would you have answered that question differently if I asked? If the girls weren’t around?” Miranda asked as she placed Andrea’s hand on her belly.

“Yes,” Andrea said. Her voice had become shaky.

“How would you have answered it?” she asked.

“Yes,” she repeated. “I would have said ‘yes.’”

Miranda’s eyes lit up and she pulled Andrea into a deep kiss. As they pulled apart, she took both of Andrea’s hands and placed them on her belly. “I want you in their life so badly, Andrea.”

Tears fell from Andrea’s eyes as she sat there, holding Miranda. At that moment, she couldn’t imagine spending the rest of her life any other way.

“Mom! Andy! Are you coming?” Cassidy shouted from the kitchen.

“We’ll be down in a minute, sweetie. Can you pour the milk?” Miranda called back down.

Andrea stood and started making her way to the stairs when Miranda took her hand and stopped her. “Darling, I’m worried,” she said.

“You just saw the doctor and everything has been going great so far, Miranda. The girls seem to be happy about new siblings, and…”

“No, I’m worried about you.”

“Me? Why are you worrying about me?”

“One of these days you’re going to get a job offer, and it will be good for you, but I can’t bear thinking of letting you go. That’s probably going to happen well before August, and then…”

“And then, when I accept an offer and leave Runway, I’ll move in here,” Andrea said.

Miranda’s eyes widened. “Really?”

“Well, I mean, if you want me to. Sorry, I kind of just invited myself.”

“Yes. I want you to. Oh, Andrea,” she said, kissing her.

“I told you I’m here for it all. And then some.”

“Andrea, I—I love you,” Miranda said as she traced Andrea’s lips with her fingertip.

Andrea smiled and kissed Miranda on the bridge of her nose. “And I love you, Miranda. Let’s go downstairs.”

As they were walking the two flights of stairs down to the kitchen, Miranda asked, “Oh, what were those two things you were going to tell me about?”

Andrea froze. “Um, I probably shouldn’t tell you right now.”

“Oh no, you don’t get to do this to me.”

She sighed. “I got a job offer from The New York Times. But I’m not going to take it. It’s an
editorial assistant position, although they call it ‘Assistant Editor,’” she said.

“Ahh, one of those ‘Assistant to the Editor’ positions,” Miranda said as they took their seats at the table. To her surprise, the girls had already reheated the chicken dish. “We’ll talk more later.”

“Mom, when do you leave for Connecticut?” Caroline asked.

“Next Friday.”

“And we’ll be at dad’s?”

“Yes. I will be returning Tuesday morning, so you’ll spend Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday night with him,” Miranda said.

“I almost forgot about that,” Andrea said. “This is the Lauren shoot, right?”

“Yes. The shoot is Sunday/Monday, but right after Paris, Nigel asked me to spend a few extra days there with him.” At Andrea’s raised eyebrows, she offered further explanation. “It’s only two hours away. We could easily drive back and forth, but, well, Nigel grew up there. His brother lives in Hartford, and I think he is hoping to visit.”

“Oh, nice,” Andrea said.

After dinner, they all curled up on the couch to watch TV for a few hours before going to bed.

“Mom, is Andy sleeping over?” Caroline asked.

“Yes, baby, she is.”

“Where is she going to sleep?” Cassidy asked.

“I was thinking she could sleep in my room. That way, no one is sleeping alone,” she said without missing a beat.

“Makes sense,” Caroline said.

“Okay, girls, I really need to get some rest. Why don’t you finish watching this upstairs?”

The girls agreed and headed up to their room. Miranda turned out all the lights, grabbed a bottle of water from the fridge, and made her way upstairs to her room. Andrea went upstairs with the girls, and Miranda smiled when she saw that the young woman had turned down the bed and started drawing a bath for her. Miranda shut and locked her bedroom door before meeting Andrea in the bathroom.

“I thought a bath might be nice,” she said with a shrug. “It’s not very hot, but I was thinking of adding a drop of sandalwood oil if you’d like.”

“That would be perfect,” Miranda said as she began to undress. “You’re not upset about Connecticut, are you?” she asked as she climbed into the giant claw-foot tub.

“No, no. I was just surprised, I guess,” Andrea said. She squirited three drops of almond oil, then one drop of the sandalwood oil into her hand, rubbed them together, then swirled them around in the water.

“So, what else were you going to tell me besides the job offer?” she asked, closing her eyes and leaning back against the tub. She wrapped one arm tightly across her breasts and traced her
swelling abdomen with the other.

Andrea took a deep breath. “At work today, Emily and Serena figured out that we’re, uh, seeing each other.”

Miranda’s eyes opened wide. “And?”

“And that’s it. I told them they couldn’t say anything. I think they get it, but still.”

“So you confirmed?”

“No. I explicitly told them I was neither confirming nor denying.”

“Which is basically the same as telling everyone!”

“I’m going to get ready for bed,” Andrea said quietly, walking out of the bathroom and shutting the door.

She quickly changed into the boxers and tank top she brought, then sat indian-style on the far side of the bed as she tried to convince herself that Miranda was not, in fact, trying to hide their relationship. More than anything, she wanted to talk to someone, but her options were even more limited now, since she apparently couldn’t tell anyone.

She grabbed her iPhone and headed out of the bedroom, disengaging the alarm system as she made her way downstairs and into the kitchen. There was a random armchair in the corner of the kitchen, probably just for decoration, but it was the closest thing to hiding in a corner she could find in Miranda’s house.

Wiping the tears from her eyes, Andrea dialed her mom’s cell phone number.

“Hello?”

“Hi Mom.”

“Andy, sweetie? Is that you?”

“Yeah.”

“Well how are you? You haven’t been returning our calls or emails. Dad and I were getting worried. Have you spoken to Nate?”

“Look, Mom. I don’t want to talk about Nate. We’re over.”

“But sweetie, he’s such a nice boy. He said you were making questionable decisions—what did he mean?”

“When did you talk to him?”

“Oh, we invited him over for the holidays. We thought you’d come, too.”

“No, Mom, that’s exactly why I didn’t come. And don’t let Nate fool you. When we were fighting that week before moving to New York, he slept with four other girls. And I heard he moved to Boston with his new girlfriend.”

“Andy, don’t make things up. He misses you.”
“Mom! I’m not talking about Nate. I don’t want him. At all. Ever.”

“Okay,” her mother said, growing silent. “Why did you call?”

Andrea sighed. “I just needed… I shouldn’t have called you.”

“No! Wait,” she said. “Are you okay, sweetie? You sound upset. I promise not to mention Nate. We miss you.”

“I’m okay. I’m just a little emotional right now. I’ve been sort of dating someone, but this person is kind of well-known and so we’ve been keeping things quiet. Emily and Serena at the office managed to put the pieces together, but when this person found out that I didn’t deny our relationship, they freaked. And, I guess I’m just disappointed.”

“Oh, sweetie. I should have known you would fall in love with a celebrity. Have you talked to him about it?”

“Not really. We just got into an argument. I feel like I can’t even say what I think because I’ll risk losing it all.”

“Is it worth it, Andy? You sound so upset.”

“Yes, Mom. It is worth it, which is why I’m so upset. If it were anyone else, I’d say ‘screw you’ and leave. But this is different.”

“You really are in love with him, aren’t you?”

“Yes. With her.”


“I know, I did, too. But she’s different. She’s worth it, and I’m so scared I’m going to lose her,” Andrea said as she started to cry again.

“Andy?” Caroline said, walking into the kitchen.

“Hey Mom, I have to go. Thanks,” she said. “I love you.”

“I love you, too, Andy. Good luck.”

Andy ended the call and turned to the young girl. “What’s up?”

“I was coming to get a drink of water. Why were you crying?”

“I was just talking to my mom.”

Caroline walked closer and stood in front of Andrea’s chair. “Is she okay?”

“Yes, my mom is fine. I just hadn’t talked to her in a while.”

“I heard you say you were scared about losing someone. Was that Mom?”

Andrea nodded.

“Andy, Mom really likes you,” she said.

“I know she does, love bug. Come here,” Andrea said, squatting down and hugging Caroline tight.
“So, does this mean you’re staying?”

“What?” she asked.

“Mom said you left. Are you staying now?”

“When was this?”

“When I was coming downstairs.”

“Did she say anything else?” Andrea asked.

“Just that the baby is making her cry all the time,” Caroline said with a shrug. “I’m thirsty.”

Andrea quickly poured her a glass of water, then turned the lights out and headed back upstairs. She made sure Caroline made it up to her room, kissed her forehead goodnight, then returned to Miranda’s room. The door was still ajar, and she could see Miranda curled up against her pillow. She quietly shut the door and crawled into the other side of the bed.

Miranda opened her eyes and lifted her head. “Andrea,” she gasped. “I thought you—“

“No. I just needed a minute.”

“Like in Paris. I drove you away.”

“I’m still here, aren’t I? Not the same,” Andrea said. “Look, I know you’re not going to apologize, but can we at least talk about this? How long do you plan to keep this relationship secret?”

“Andrea, you work for me. I could lose my job.”

“I know that. It could have negative repercussions for me, too. But we can’t live in a dream world where—” she instantly stopped talking, knowing she went too far. “I’m sorry.”

Miranda moved closer on the bed and softly brushed Andrea’s cheek. “I know, darling, but can we stay in this dream world for just a bit longer?”

“Yes, but we need a plan, Miranda. We can only say ‘no comment’ for so long.”

“Okay,” she said, “tomorrow we will decide when and what to say. But tonight, I just want to hold you.”

Andrea nodded as Miranda snuggled against her side and quickly drifted off into sleep.

Several hours later, Andrea woke when Miranda got up to use the bathroom. “Everything okay?” she asked when she climbed back into bed.

“Yes,” Miranda said, slipping into her spot alongside the young woman. “Here,” she said, taking Andrea’s hand and pressing her palm to her belly. “Feel that?”

Andrea’s eyes lit up. “Was that a kick?”

Miranda nodded. “First time. The girls didn’t start kicking until much later,” she said.

“I thought you told the doctor you felt it a few days ago?” Andrea asked.

“Quickening. It’s a fluttering feeling inside when the babies are too small to kick properly. This
one, you can actually feel.”

Andrea smiled and kissed Miranda as she settled into her side. “I was meaning to ask you—were you planning on having an amnio?”

“I don’t think so. It seems like the risk is too high, and then it’s doubled because they’d have to stick each baby.”

“True. And everything is looking good with your bloodwork and the scans,” Andrea said. “I’m sure it will be fine. Is this a comfortable position to sleep in?” she asked.

“Mm-hmm. I can’t sleep on my stomach anymore, and I don’t know, I just sleep better on your shoulder.”

“We should get you one of those total body pillows,” Andrea said.

“Mmm, okay,” she said. “Tomorrow.”

They spent most of the weekend in each other’s arms, both in bed and on the couch. Miranda helped Andrea draft a polite and grateful letter, turning down the Assistant Editor position, and Andrea helped Miranda pack for her trip to Connecticut.

“Well, I think you’re all packed,” Andrea said on Friday morning. Nigel would be meeting Miranda at the townhouse shortly since he would be driving the Elias Clarke SUV for the weekend.

“I’ll only be two hours away if you need anything. James has your number—and Emily’s for that matter—if there’s anything with the girls.”

“I’ll take care of it,” she said while Miranda was digging through her purse to find her phone. “There’s one other thing—I got you this,” she said, handing Miranda a large shopping bag.

“For me?” she asked, surprised.

“Yes. A gift for your trip.”

Miranda’s eyes widened and she eagerly opened the bag, pulling out a large pillow.

“It’s the mini version of the giant pillow you ordered. I slept with it for the past week, so, um, it should smell like me,” Andrea said, blushing.

“This is perfect,” she said, kissing Andrea on the cheek. “I was just thinking of grabbing a pillow to take in the car.”

“What time are you leaving?”

“Nigel said he’d be here in—” she peered at the clock on the wall, “forty minutes.”

“We have time if you want to, you know…before you leave for the weekend.”

Andrea watched as Miranda’s lips turned upwards in a grin. “You’re spoiling me, you know that?” she said, kissing Andrea. Her lips were consuming as she lifted her leg, trying to make contact with Andrea’s thigh.

“Oh wait, wait,” Andrea said, pushing her back against the counter. “I’ve got this,” she said,
sinking down to her knees. She put her hands on each side of Miranda’s belly, softly caressing her skin.

Miranda moaned and arched her back as she gripped the edge of the granite.

Andrea slipped her fingers inside the waistband of Miranda’s tights and gently tugged them off. With her underwear and tights around her ankles, Andrea lifted her pleated sweater dress and bunched it between her breasts and her belly. “So beautiful,” she whispered as she pressed kisses to Miranda’s swollen belly. “Gorgeous…sexy,” she said, trailing her kisses lower and lower.

Miranda’s body was jerking, and Andrea could tell by the way she was holding her breath that she was about to orgasm at any second. Again, she gently traced her fingertips all the way around her belly and continued placing wet, soft kisses on her skin. She felt Miranda’s belly tighten beneath her, signaling her orgasm.

Andrea kept her hands on her belly as she bent further to taste her juices, which were practically gushing. She licked, lapped, and sucked, sending wave after wave of arousal through the editor’s body. She slipped her underwear and tights back up, then smoothed out her dress over her belly.

Miranda opened her eyes and took a deep breath. “Oh my god, Andrea. Next time, I have to be sitting down for that,” she said.

Andrea smiled and led her to the kitchen chair, kissing her softly on the lips. “I’m going to go get cleaned up before Nigel gets here,” she said.

“Wait,” she said, tugging at the young woman’s wrist. She kissed her hard. “I love you. I’ll call you when we get there.”

Andrea nodded and headed to the bathroom to rinse out her mouth and reapply her lipstick. She heard the front door open, so she quickly dried her hands and met him in the foyer.

“Hey Six, I figured you were here. We’re waiting on a call from Valentino—they should be letting us know which shade of green the jacket is. Can you call me with that information right away?”

“Sure, but I thought today and tomorrow were vacation days for you?”

“Well,” he said, shrugging, “the magazine never sleeps!”

Miranda emerged from the kitchen looking as composed as ever, carrying her Snoogle under her left arm and her purse on her right. “Are we ready?” she asked.

Andrea nodded and grabbed Miranda’s bag, along with another small cooler. She threw Miranda’s Vuitton duffle into the back, and placed the cooler in the backseat. Inside were several bottles of water, an apple, a yogurt, and a snack pack of Oreo cookies.

“Nigel, I hate to disappoint you, but I plan to sleep in the backseat,” Miranda said.

Andrea held the door open for her while Nigel walked around to the other side.

“Not a problem,” he said. “Andy, do you need a ride back to Runway?”

“Oh, I was just going to take the subway.”

“Nonsense, get in,” Nigel said. “I haven’t been behind the wheel in about five years, so this should be fun.”
Miranda groaned in the backseat. “Just don’t make me sick, please.”

Once they were on their way, they heard a very loud moan coming from the back seat. Nigel’s eyes widened, and Andrea quickly turned around to see Miranda on her side, curled against the pillow.

“Is everything okay?” Nigel whispered to Andrea.

She smiled. “She just got a new pregnancy pillow. Apparently she likes it.”

“I love it,” she said from the backseat. “Don’t think I can’t hear you.”

“I almost wish you were coming with us, Six,” Nigel said as they pulled up at Elias Clarke.

Andrea chuckled nervously. “Let’s just say I’m grateful for a bit of free time. Have a nice trip, hope the shoot goes well, and I’ll call if I hear from Valentino or the girls!” she said as she exited the vehicle.

By the time she made it to her desk, she already had a text message from Miranda: Do you not have enough free time anymore?

Andrea smiled and wrote back: I was just saying that. I would happily give every minute of my free time to you (like this morning). I love you. Enjoy your pillow. xo

She had only talked to Miranda twice over the weekend, but it sounded like she and Nigel were having a nice time in Hartford. On Monday morning, she knew something was wrong the minute she walked into the office. Emily was frantically answering call after call.

“What’s up?”

“Here, look,” she said, shoving Page Six in Andrea’s direction. “If I weren’t waiting for a call from Valentino, I would just ignore these phones all day. Bloody hell, why couldn’t she warn us?”

Andrea started laughing as she looked down at the paper. It was a beautiful picture, really, but she could see how easily it could be misconstrued. Miranda was wearing flats and almost flaunting her baby bump, and Nigel was holding her hand, whispering something into her ear that made her laugh. Anyone else might have had to do a double-take because Miranda’s face looked so different than the intimidating editor.

“Did she see it yet?” Andrea said.

Emily shook her head. “At least she doesn’t look like a whale with her belly peeking out from under her top as she’s eating a hamburger.”

Andrea snapped a picture of the paper with her iPhone and messaged it to Miranda with the note: Should I be jealous? xo

Thirty seconds later, her phone rang. It was Miranda.

“You have got to be kidding me!” she said.

“I know, isn’t it crazy?”

“Really, this is too good to be true. All of the compromising photos they could have used, all the looks of discomfort, the awkwardness, poor lighting and angles—I mean, I can hardly believe it.”
“I know,” Andrea said. “It’s a great photo. You look amazing, radiant, you’re glowing. And you’re smiling. Annnd, it’s Nigel.”

“What does the caption say in the photo? It didn’t come through.”

“A Baby On the Way for Royal Family of Runway,” Andrea said, trying not to laugh.

“I have to go show this to Nigel,” Miranda said. “Will you call the girls this morning and just give them a heads-up? Sometimes photographers catch them unaware. Actually, nevermind. I can call them myself.”

“Are you sure? It’s not a problem,” she said.

“No, no, I will call them. Oh, and Andrea, you have no idea how badly I wish you were here.”

“Likewise,” Andrea said. “Tuesday night?”

“Yes, and bring a bag if you’d like. This pillow is amazing, but it’s not you.”

“I lo—” Andrea began, catching herself. “I—I’ll have that for you when you return.”

“I love you, too, darling,” Miranda said, ending the call.

“Was that Miranda?” Emily asked.

Andrea nodded.

“Is she livid or what?”

“Actually, she found it quite entertaining,” Andrea said.

“Who is this person and what has she done with Miranda Priestly?” Emily wondered aloud.

Not long after returning from Connecticut, Miranda’s baby bump became quite obvious. Even her walk was just a little bit different. She was wearing items mostly from Donna Karan’s collection, though under some circumstances, she would wear non-maternity clothes in a size or two larger. She could no longer effectively disguise it with cardigans, wrap blouses, and other accessories, so she opted for empire waist dresses, lycra-blend dresses, and some high-waisted skirts. She began wearing a larger, cotton bra without an underwire, and since she needed to change her underwear so many times a day, she opted for the 5-for-$30 kind from Victoria’s Secret.

Miranda’s sixteen-week appointment went well. The doctor confirmed that both placentas and amniotic sacs were just fine, and the babies’ heart rates were well within the acceptable range at 124 and 131 bpm. Miranda’s blood pressure, again, was high enough for Dr. Assaf to begin discussing gestational hypertension, but her urine tests did not show any elevated proteins. Regardless, Miranda would be monitored for signs of preeclampsia throughout the rest of the pregnancy.

Andrea received two more offers, and while she was pleased, Miranda again advised that she turn them down and kindly explain she was looking for a Staff Writer position at minimum.

After her trip to Connecticut, she found herself wanting to spend more and more time with Andrea. Once the girls knew about the pregnancy, she decided it would be okay to also tell them Andrea would be staying with them overnight a lot “because mommy needs her.” Somehow, they still hadn’t pushed any more about Andrea was sleeping in the same bed as their mother—or maybe
they knew why and it didn’t phase them. Whatever the case, they still hadn’t disclosed their relationship to anyone else.

Next month, Nigel and Emily would be flying overseas for Milan Fashion Week. Several months ago, since Dalton’s Spring Break coincided perfectly with Milan this year, she arranged for Caroline and Cassidy to spend the week at their grandparents’ house just outside of Boston. While it would make sense to cancel the trip and stay home with them herself, she decided it would be good for them to see James’ mother and father. And even better: it would give her the opportunity to escape the city with Andrea.

The Runway offices were buzzing with excitement as the team prepared for the upcoming Milan Fashion Week. This year, Elias Clarke was hosting the closing party, so there were a million extra preparations, all of which Emily was handling brilliantly.

Miranda realized she would soon be facing the prospect of having two entirely new assistants—about the same time she would have two newborns at home. That was certainly not an ideal situation, so she made note to discuss this with Andrea later. After the she got through this day.

This morning was the semi-annual meeting of the Elias Clarke board of directors. The March meeting always includes the editors of all the various EC publications, while the October meeting includes the heads of finance. Today, Miranda was dressed to kill in a pencil skirt, a low-cut blouse displaying her swelling bosom, and tuxedo-cut blazer. From the front, it was nearly impossible to tell Miranda was pregnant because of the way the blouse was tucked in, although there was no mistaking her profile when she turned.

“Andrea?” Miranda called.

She quickly jumped from her chair and hurried into the office, walking in just as Miranda was swapping her 2” wedges for a pair of 6” Prada patent pumps.

“Wow,” Andrea said.

Miranda looked up. “Excuse me?”

“I said wow. You look incredible right now.”

Miranda grinned. “None of them have seen me since before Christmas. I need to work the sympathy vote today.”

“You mean, they don’t even know you’re pregnant? But surely, the photos from a few weeks back —?”

“No, I don’t think so. Everyone thinks the photos were doctored because of that one with Nigel,” she said. “Isn’t that funny? Who would have thought all I needed to do to hide my pregnancy for a few months was to be photographed with a middle-aged gay man.”

“Well, good luck today. Anything I can do?”

“Help Emily. She’s overwhelmed with that damn party in Milan on the 28th. She won’t ask for help, so you need to step in.”

“Got it. Will do.”

“I want to get up there before everyone else,” she said, standing to her feet. “That way, they won’t really see me until the meeting’s over, or probably until I need to get up and pee.” She grabbed her
portfolio, her cell phone, and a bottle of Fiji water. “Are you sure this looks okay?”

“Emily!” Andrea called. “Serena, you too.”

They both came running in. “Yes?”

Andrea pointed to Miranda. “Tell her she looks good in that outfit.”

“She’s right, you do,” Serena said. “It accentuates your glow.”

Miranda practically blushed. “Thank you, Serena,” she said.

“You look amazing, Miranda. Really, that blouse is, well, perfect, and I would have never thought that a pencil skirt could look so, so—”

Miranda smiled and walked past her. “Watch your mouth, Emily. I hear Brazilians can be quite possessive,” she said, walking out to the elevators.

Emily and Serena were left speechless, and all Andrea could do was laugh.

“Does she know?” Emily asked.

“Miranda has a way of knowing everything, Em,” Andrea said.

“Bloody hell! You don’t think she’d fire me or anything, do you?”

“No, I wouldn’t worry. She’s got a lot to deal with right now. Your love life is low on her list of priorities,” Andrea reassured. “In fact, give me Nigel’s schedule for Milan. I’ll figure it out while you focus on the party.”

Emily’s eyes widened. “A-are you sure?”

“Yes, Em. Just don’t get hit by a cab in the next three weeks, okay? I don’t want to go to Milan.”

Emily smiled before painting on her haughty exterior. “Really, Andrea, I don’t know what you’re talking about,” she said.

Three hours had passed and Miranda still wasn’t back from her meeting. Andrea sent a quick text message asking if she was okay, and Miranda replied with a simple “yes.” At least there was that.

After making a few phone calls to security and Irv’s assistant, Andrea learned that they had a catered lunch delivered just over an hour ago. Just when Andrea was about to send another message, the elevator dinged and Miranda and Irv stepped off.

Before she could even begin to speculate why on earth Miranda was sharing an elevator with him, Miranda led Irv straight into her office.

“Make yourself comfortable,” she said. “Andrea, some green tea for Irv and my lemon ginger water when you get a second,” she said.

Andrea nodded and headed to the kitchen to prepare Miranda’s water: a glass of Pellegrino with one thin slice of lemon and a disc of fresh ginger. For Irv, she dipped a teabag in hot water, in Miranda’s least favorite Oscar de la Renta tea cup. When she entered the office, she was surprised to see Miranda sitting on the sofa. Irv had pulled one of the armchairs closer, and from what she could hear when she brought in the drinks, it sounded like they were talking about Miranda’s pregnancy.
Andrea closed the door on her way out—not because Miranda asked her to, but because she didn’t want to hear Miranda’s fake laugh all afternoon. Instead, she focused on Nigel’s schedule for Milan.

“Andy, what will you do while we are in Milan?” Serena asked.

“Oh, I’ll just answer the phones and what not. It will be nice and quiet.”

“Do you know if Miranda is taking the girls anywhere?” Emily asked.

“No, why?”

“Well, it’s their spring break. They were supposed to go up to Boston, but I thought with Miranda staying home, she would do something else with them,” Emily said.

“Maybe. I don’t really know.”

“I thought you said you were friends with her, no?”

“She’s my mentor. She’s helping me find a job. We don’t talk about things like what she’s doing with the girls for Spring Break,” Andrea said. “Do you know if Nigel has any other meetings scheduled?” She needed to change the subject.

“Not sure. Ask him.”

After work that day, Andrea had Roy drive her to the townhouse. It was practically a ritual: book, dry-cleaning, or empty-handed, Andrea always stopped at Miranda’s on her way home from work.

“Hello?” Andrea called out as she set her bag down. The house was unusually quiet.

“Hey Andy, we’re in here,” Cassidy called from the kitchen.

She walked into the kitchen and saw the girls doing their homework at the breakfast bar. “Where’s your mom?”

“She said she wanted to rest for a while.”

“Is she okay?”

“Yeah, I think so. She was trying to lay on the couch, but said she was stiff. So she did some stretches and stuff and went upstairs.”

“Got it. You two okay down here?”

“Yes,” she said, sitting on the bed next to Miranda. “How are you?”

“Everything hurts,” she said. “Can you massage my feet?”
“Sure.” Andrea took her rings and watch off, setting them on the dresser. She grabbed a container of whipped argan oil and began massaging it into Miranda’s swollen feet.

“Ohh thank god, that feels wonderful,” Miranda said. “Those heels were too tight today. I should have never tried to wear them.”

Andrea smiled. “Did the meeting go well at least?”

“Yes. Actually, it went perfectly. I didn’t have to pee until they brought lunch in, but by that time, everyone was getting up. Felicia saw me first in the bathroom, then when we returned, the others all noticed, too, and they were all very congratulatory.”

Andrea continued massaging her feet and ankles. “What did you and Irv talk about for so long?” she asked.

“Everything. He’s reassured me that I can take as much time as I need off, and my job will be here when I return.”

“What? How did that happen?”

“Mm, don’t stop, keep rubbing,” Miranda said, flexing her toes. “First, I invited Irv back to my office so we could catch up. I showed him the sonogram and told him I was having twins again, and that my doctor expected them sometime in July. Then, I got teary-eyed and told him how I was alone and didn’t have anyone except for Nigel, who would no doubt be busy running the magazine.”

“What??”

“I had to earn his sympathy…and it worked like a charm. He told me to call him or his wife if I needed anything. He was very supportive, really. I was surprised. It’s been a while since I’ve had a somewhat normal conversation with that rat.”

“Do you really feel alone? Am I not supportive?”

“No, no, no. I need him to think I need his support so that he doesn’t replace me while I’m on maternity leave. Darling, you are beyond supportive.” Miranda said. “When you texted me earlier to see how I was doing, that was so thoughtful I almost started crying. Come here,” she said, patting the bed. She extricated herself from her pillow and curled up against Andrea. “I couldn’t do this without you, darling,” she said.

“Don’t say that,” Andrea said. “You’re the strongest, most capable woman I know, and I have no doubt that you could manage anything you set your mind to. Can you turn over to your other side?”

Miranda turned and positioned herself against her pillow while Andrea pressed up against her.

“Is this better?” she asked.

“I can’t see you, but yes, it’s more comfortable,” Miranda said.

Andrea wrapped her arm around and rested her hand on Miranda’s belly. “What are the girls doing for Break?” Andrea asked quietly.

“Shoot. That’s what I was going to do today,” Miranda said. “I totally forgot.”

“It’s the same week as Milan, isn’t it?”
“Yes. The girls were already planning on visiting Helen and George, and I don’t want to interfere there. But I was wondering if you might want to take a trip with me,” Miranda said.

“I thought you couldn’t travel—that’s why you sent Nigel to Milan.”

“No airplanes. Car and train is fine. I was thinking of heading to the Hamptons for the week, just for a change of scenery.”

“Isn’t your place rented out for the season?”

“No, only through February 28th. Would you want to come?”

“Yes, I’d love to, but, Miranda, I don’t know if I have enough time off.”

Miranda rolled her eyes. “You took one day off in the entire time I’ve known you. You’re entitled to five paid holidays and four sick days each year.”

“Oh, um, won’t it look suspicious if we take a vacation together?”

Miranda paused for a moment. “I think it will be fine. Will you come?”

“Okay.” Andrea leaned forward and kissed Miranda’s cheek. “The girls are probably getting hungry,” she said. “I’ll go make them some pasta.”

“You still owe me a back rub,” Miranda said.

“Is it that bad?” she asked with concern.

Miranda shrugged. “I’m sure it’s just from sitting in those awful chairs in the conference room all day. I’ll take a hot shower tonight. Let’s go downstairs, I need to get moving,” she said as she climbed from the bed and gently stretched her shoulders.

Andrea stayed over that night. Though she didn’t want to admit it, she was a little worried that Miranda was so achy. She wasn’t really complaining, but that could be due to the fact that Andrea’s hands were massaging and caressing her for the better part of the evening.

As was becoming the norm these days, Miranda woke around two o’clock, needing to use the bathroom. Surprisingly, her bed was empty. She could have sworn Andrea spent the night. She quickly did her business in the bathroom, then pulled on her silk robe and crept out of the bedroom. She began to head downstairs until quiet voices on the staircase caught her attention.

“Cassidy is that you? Bobbsey, what’s the matter?” Miranda asked, sitting next to her and Andrea on the step.

“I’m sorry I woke you up, Mom,” Cassidy said, wiping the tears from her eyes.

Miranda exchanged a worried glance with Andrea. “Sweetheart, you did not wake me up—not at all. You know mommy has trouble sleeping because of the baby. Why are you crying?”

“I had a nightmare,” she said. “You went away so the baby could be born, and you never came back.”

Miranda’s eyes widened, and Andrea just shrugged. “I told Cass that you weren’t going away anywhere, and that even if you had to stay in the hospital, she and her sister could come visit you every day, isn’t that right?” Andrea said.
“Yes, baby, of course,” Miranda said as she pulled her daughter onto her shrinking lap. “Cassidy, I love you and your sister so much, I could never leave you. Remember when we went to Mexico for Christmas and I wouldn’t let you out of my sight? Never, baby.”


“Not anymore, sweetheart. Uncle Nigel is going to Milan by himself this year. I didn’t go when you and your sister were babies—I didn’t go until you were almost six years old, did you know that? I didn’t want to leave you.”

“Why did you change your mind?”

“Well, Mommy and Daddy weren’t living together anymore, and we worked out our schedules so that you would be visiting with him or your grandma and grandpa when I went away for work,” Miranda said. “And now, when the babies—when this baby’s born, I’m going to be spending a lot more time at home.” She exchanged glances with Andrea.

“Andy said you are going to take a whole month off work. Is that true?”

Miranda smiled at Andrea. “Yes, sweetheart. It will probably be more like two or three months because the doctors want to make sure that I rest, and that I am healed before I get back into my stilettos.”

Cassidy giggled and hugged Miranda tight, then whispered something in her ear.

“Of course, baby, here,” Miranda said, taking the girl’s small hands and placing them on the left side of her belly. “He or she has been pretty active,” she said. “Just hold still.”

After a few minutes, Cassidy’s eyes lit up. “Was that the baby?”

Miranda smiled and nodded. “Can I talk to it?”

“Sure, if you want. I don’t think the baby’s ears are fully developed yet, but they say it can be soothing for them, and that they will react to your voice quicker once they’re born,” Miranda said.

“Baby brother or sister, I’m your big sister Cassidy, but you can call me Cass. Don’t kick mommy too hard in the middle of the night, okay? The doctor said she needs to sleep,” Cassidy whispered.

Miranda smiled and kissed her daughter on the forehead. “Thank you, Cassidy, I think that calmed the baby down,” she said. “Why don’t you let Andrea tuck you back in bed, and I’ll see you in the morning.”

Once Andrea helped Cass back into bed, she found Miranda still sitting on the stair. She reached out her hand and pulled Miranda to her feet, and they walked in silence back to the bedroom.

“They look up to you,” Miranda said as she curled against Andrea. She slipped her hand beneath her nightgown and began stroking her belly. “Did you ever want children?”

“Sure, I did. I knew I didn’t want to start a family with Nate, and honestly,” she said, “I never really pictured myself as having a traditional family at all. I mean, the thought of a husband just never appealed to me.”
“You grew up wanting to be a single mom?” Miranda asked with a smirk.

“No, no. It wasn’t like that. I mean, some girls start planning their weddings when they’re like twelve. I was never like that. I want kids, but I never really wanted to make a baby with a husband. Sorry. I never thought about the logistics.”

“Well,” Miranda said softly. “I guess you lucked out with me.”

“Miranda, you know I wanted this before I even knew about the babies, right?”

“Mm-hmm. How could I forget New Years, or celebrating my divorce?”

“Why did you really come after me in Paris?” Andrea asked.

“What? I needed you to finish out the day.”

“No, you really didn’t. Everything was set. Nigel was with you at the last show. Your bags were mostly packed, too. There was something else.”

“You were different. You cared, and I could feel it. I don’t know how to explain.” She reached and took Andrea’s hand and placed it on her cheek before kissing her slowly and deeply.

It was Monday, March 24th, and Miranda was exactly eighteen weeks.

“Well, will we find out the sex today?” Miranda asked the nurse who was taking her blood pressure.

“Hopefully so, if they decide to cooperate,” she said. “How are you feeling?”

“How are you feeling?”

“What? I needed you to finish out the day.”

“No, you really didn’t. Everything was set. Nigel was with you at the last show. Your bags were mostly packed, too. There was something else.”

“You were different. You cared, and I could feel it. I don’t know how to explain.” She reached and took Andrea’s hand and placed it on her cheek before kissing her slowly and deeply.

“I’ve been fine, really,” Miranda said. “My back is a little sore, but it’s nothing that a hot shower doesn’t soothe.”

“Good. Make sure that if you use heat, you’re not placing heating pads directly on your belly. If you need to use heat for relief, I would suggest a warm—not hot—bath, or wrapping the heating pad in a blanket before placing it against your body,” Dr. Assaf said. “Or, a shower as you said. Is there any other discomfort?”

“No.”

Andrea quietly coughed.

Miranda rolled her eyes. “I am not telling her about that,” she hissed.

“About what, Miranda?”

“It’s nothing.”
“You should probably tell me everything,” Dr. Assaf said. “This is a high-risk pregnancy. You’re over forty and pregnant with twins. I can assure you there’s nothing I haven’t heard yet.”

“Fine,” Miranda said. “Ankles are okay, except for the day I tried to wear six-inch heels. No heartburn. I was dizzy when I got up once or twice. I was constipated last week and took a laxative, then altered my diet to reduce gas, as it was becoming bothersome.” She turned and looked at Andrea, “Happy?”

“And then last weekend, there was something with your eyes,” Andrea said. “Remember, you said you thought you needed new glasses?”

“Oh, right. That’s nothing. It was just eye strain—happens whenever I’m using that iPad for too long.”

“See how easy that was, Miranda?” Dr. Assaf asked with a smile. “Did the laxative relieve you?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, good. I trust you are getting a proper, balanced diet?”

“Yes.”

“How often does the blurred vision occur?”

“I don’t know, every day or so. It only lasts for a few minutes, and I can usually blink it away.”

“Have you had your iPad for a while now?”

“No really, just for the past few months.”

Dr. Assaf made a note in the chart. “Okay, it’s important that you tell me everything. We just want to take every precaution we can, here, because I want you to deliver two healthy babies,” she said as she pulled the ultrasound machine closer. “By the way, have you thought at all about your birthing plan?”

“No, not at all.”

“That’s fine, it’s still early. Of course if there are any complications, we may be forced to deliver via Cesarean.”

“I’m sorry, but can you remind me what a ‘birthing plan’ is? It’s been a few years,” Miranda said.

“Oh of course. Actually, during your last pregnancy they really weren’t doing this that much. But of course, now, we have so many women seeking natural deliveries with the assistance of midwives or doulas—I’ll have Lauren give you some info before you leave, and you can review everything at your leisure. It’s basically a list where you can state your preferences for anything and everything during the labor and delivery.”

“Wonderful, thank you.” Miranda reached down and squeezed Andrea’s hand while Dr. Assaf adjusted the ultrasound device. “We can work on that during our trip,” she said.

“Oh, taking a vacation, Miranda?” the doctor asked.

“Yes, just to the Hamptons for a week.”

“That sounds lovely. My husband’s family has a place in Sag Harbor. Where are you staying?”
“I have a place in Sagaponack. I haven’t been out there in a while, so it will definitely be nice and relaxing.”

“Lots of leisurely long walks, yoga at the beach, right?” she asked with a chuckle.

“Yes,” Miranda laughed. “That’s the hope, anyway. How are the babies?” Miranda asked. She was looking up at the ceiling, and Andrea could see the concern in her face.

“They are both doing very well, Miranda. Both have strong heartbeats, and it looks like they are both very active. Take a look,” she said, turning the monitor towards her.

“Which one is on my left side?” Miranda asked. “I can feel that one more.”

“This one. It’s a mirror image,” the doctor said as she pointed to the screen. “She’s a spunky one.”

“She?”

“She!!” Miranda and Andrea gasped.

“Yes,” Dr. Assaf said with a chuckle. “We have a good view today. You’re having two girls, Miranda.”

Miranda clasped her hand over her mouth as tears streamed down her cheeks.

Andrea squeezed her other hand. “Can you make two prints of the ultrasound?” she asked.

The doctor nodded. “I’m just going to take a closer look at their anatomy and development. This is routine at eighteen weeks, so you have nothing to worry about, but it will take a few minutes.”

Miranda looked back up and wiped at her eyes. Andrea grabbed a tissue and stood next to the exam table, gently dabbing at the tears, careful to stay out of the doctor’s way. She gently tucked a lock of hair behind Miranda’s ear, and Miranda kissed her hand.

“Twin girls,” Miranda whispered. “I didn’t even think that was a possibility.”

Andrea smiled and gently kissed her on the lips.

“Miranda,” the doctor said, “everything is looking absolutely perfect. This is the type of pregnancy we see in a thirty-year old, so you should be very grateful. Both twins’ skulls are within 0.02 cm of one another, and their organs all show normal development. Twenty fingers, twenty toes, four arms and four legs—they’re perfect.”

Miranda smiled and squeezed Andrea’s hand.

“I do need to check your cervix, though. Sometimes we see early effacement and dilation, so we want to make continue to monitor that as well. Rest assured, we have ways to keep you closed down there if we need to. I’ll step out while you get changed—”

“No, wait,” she said, quickly unbuttoning her trousers and slipping them down. Andrea grabbed them from her ankles. “This is hardly the place for modesty,” Miranda said with a shrug.

Dr. Assaf nodded and lifted Miranda’s legs into the stirrups. “Again, everything is looking good. Have you been doing any other sort of activity other than the yoga you mentioned?”

“Climbing some stairs, and walking a little, but that’s it.”
“I only ask because you’re already measuring almost ten weeks ahead. That’s great for the babies, but with your petite frame, it could become a bit too much. I expect you’ll begin feeling some round ligament pain soon if you haven’t already. If it lasts more than a few seconds at a time, give us a call.”

“Doctor, I just have one more question,” Miranda said quietly.

“Mm-hmm?”

“Um, what about sex? Is it still okay for the babies?”

“Certainly, Miranda. This should go without saying, but don’t do anything that causes you discomfort. Some couples find that penetration is more difficult as the pregnancy progresses, so you may need to adjust your positioning, but it’s safe to engage in intercourse until your water breaks.”

“Good.”

“Miranda, I’d like to see you back in two weeks. In the meantime, keep doing what you’re doing, and please call the office if there’s absolutely anything you can think of. I’ll make sure Lauren has the birthing plan paperwork for you at the front desk.”

Miranda smiled and thanked her.

Once they made their way back to the town car, Miranda asked Andrea why she wanted two prints of the ultrasound.

“I was thinking that we could put one in a frame and give it to the girls as a sort of getting-to-know-their-little-sisters gift or something.” When Miranda didn’t respond, she started to backtrack. “But I mean, that’s up to you. It doesn’t hurt to have a second copy, especially for a scrapbook or something. I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to push--”

“Andrea,” Miranda said, interrupting. “I think they would love that. It’s a wonderful idea and I’m touched at how thoughtful you are when it comes to my girls,” she said, kissing Andrea softly on the cheek. “Darling, do you think the girls will be disappointed?”

“What? Why?”

“Well, they won’t be the only girls anymore,” Miranda said.

“No, just the opposite, actually. I think they’ll be very excited to hear they’re going to have two little sisters to take care of and boss around. Very excited.”

“Are you serious?”

Andrea nodded. “God, Miranda, I love you so much.”

Miranda smiled. “Are you sure it’s not just because I let you slather platinum cream on my belly?”

Andrea’s eyes widened, and they both laughed as Roy quickly pressed the switch for the privacy screen. “You’ve scared him off,” Andrea said.

“He’ll get over it,” Miranda said. “Andrea, touch me, I want to feel you,” she said.

“Here?”
“Don’t make a horny pregnant woman ask twice, Andrea.”

“Okay, okay,” she said, carefully undoing her blouse and smoothing her hands over her belly. “You’re so beautiful,” she whispered. “So sexy, god. I want to devour you,” she said as she placed wet kisses all over her belly. She slid her hand under the waistband of Miranda’s pants and plunged her fingers inside the hot wetness. “You know what I love about these maternity clothes?” she said. “It is so easy to get in your pants.”

“Mm, then I should start…wearing them…for you,” she said as she choked out her orgasm.

Andrea caught her lips in a passionate kiss. “We’re almost at Runway,” she whispered.

“You go on up. I’ll be around in a few minutes.”

Andrea dug through her bag and quickly reapplied her lip gloss. “Did you mean it—that you would wear these pants for me?” Andrea asked.

“Of course, darling.”

“No, seriously. I mean, if I asked you to wear something for me—at work—you would?”

“Yes. Andrea, there isn’t much I wouldn’t do for you right now.”

Andrea practically leapt across the backseat, hugging Miranda tightly.

“Andy!” Cassidy called, running to greet her at the door. “Mom, Andy’s here!”

“Hey, Cass. What’s got you so excited?”

“Mom said you were bringing a present for us. Did you forget it?”

“Nope. Why don’t we all sit on the couch, okay?”

Cassidy nodded and ran upstairs to find her sister. Miranda suddenly appeared in the hallway. “You found a frame? I really want to tell them,” she said.

“All taken care of,” she said, pulling the frame out of her bag. She wrapped it in some tissue paper and a bow.

“Caroline, Cassidy,” Miranda called, “we have something for you.”

They came running down the stairs and eagerly ran to the couch. Miranda handed them the gift as she wrapped her arm around Andrea.

The girls eagerly tore at the paper and their squeals filled the living room as they fought to get a better look at the photo.

“TWINS!!??” Caroline cried.

“Oh my god, they are so cute!” Cassidy said.

“Cass, you can’t tell that yet,” Caroline said.

“Doesn’t matter. I know they’re going to be. I mean, Mom is really pretty.”

“Are they boys or girls?” Caroline asked.
“Girls,” Miranda said.

“Wow, there are going to be six of us now,” Cassidy said.

Miranda squeezed Andrea closer and laid her head on the young woman’s shoulder. “I’m going upstairs to rest for a while,” she said, “and maybe I can even convince Andrea to give me another foot massage,” she said with a wink. “Do you girls have a lot of homework left to do?”

“I just have science.”

“I have to write three more sentences, then I’m done.”

“Okay, why don’t you take it up to your room, and maybe after you’re all finished, we can watch a movie or something,” Miranda said. They nodded and went back upstairs to their rooms.

“Another foot massage?” Andrea asked.

“No. I actually need to finish looking through the book, but I was going to do it in bed. Will you lay with me?”

Andrea nodded and followed Miranda up the stairs.

“I’ll have a wrap from The Protein Bar.”

“Quinoa and black bean?” Andrea called, halfway out the door.

“Yes, and get something for yourself, too.”

Andrea stopped and turned around. “Really?”

Miranda shrugged. “Everyone else is in a Milan meeting for the next few hours since their plane takes off this evening.”

Andrea smiled and ran out the door to pickup lunch. When she returned, she was surprised Miranda had pulled two chairs up to the table in her office. On one side was her ginger-lemon water, and on the other, a fountain Diet Coke that could only have come from the cafeteria downstairs.

“Is this alright?” she asked.

“Did you actually go down to three for that?”

Miranda smirked. “Contrary to popular belief, I have been in this building’s cafeteria before.”

As they were eating, Andrea put the other half of her wrap on Miranda’s plate without saying a word. Before long, Miranda finished her own and took a bite of the extra half, grinning at Andrea across the table.

“So, I was thinking we could leave tomorrow when you’re finished with work. It should be an easy day, but they might call first thing in the morning when they’ve landed with any last-minute details. Other than that, you should be able to leave at lunch.”

“Okay, but Miranda I haven’t had time to go prepare the house—you know, dust, vacuum, laundry, groceries. I can go tomorrow afternoon and you can meet me Saturday morning if you’d like. That should be enough time.”
“Why would we do that? I am perfectly capable of grocery shopping or changing sheets on the bed,” she said. “Or if you want, I can just send a cleaning company there tomorrow morning.”

“No, we can do it. I just thought you wouldn’t want to.”

“Andrea, I employ a lot of people to do a lot of different things—not because I don’t want to, and certainly not because I am incapable. It’s simply more efficient, and allows me to spend my time focusing on the magazine, my daughters…you,” she said. “This is going to sound ridiculous, but I kind of miss taking care of the house.”

“You—Miranda Priestly misses being a housewife?”

“No, that is not what I meant,” Miranda said with a laugh. “Certainly not. But there is something inherently feminine about it all. Taking care of the children, cooking their meals, ensuring they have clean sheets and clean clothes, washing the dishes, and keeping them healthy. I think I’ve always tried to ensure my daughters see me in that way, not just someone who pays others to take care of them.”

“I think these maternal thoughts are stemming from those two,” she said, pointing to Miranda’s belly with a chuckle. “But yes, I know what you mean. And, I’m perfectly happy to cater to your maternal whims this week.”

Miranda raised her eyebrow and gave her a curious look.

“I will do the vacuuming, and I will carry the laundry basket for you, but otherwise, you can cook and clean all you want,” she said with a grin, “starting Saturday.”

Miranda smiled and shook her head as Andrea cleared the plates. When she returned from the kitchenette, she set a bag of Oreo cookies on the table. Miranda looked up at her with tears in her eyes.

“What’s wrong?” Andrea asked, squatting next to her chair.

“Nothing. Nothing at all. It’s just—you get me so well. Fifty years and I gave up. I was too picky or complicated or demanding or something. There would never be someone who understood me and who could give me what I needed, I told myself. And when for a second I thought it could be you, I wouldn’t let myself believe it. But—but, it’s—“

“All this because of the Oreos?” Andrea asked as she squeezed Miranda’s hand.

“I don’t know, I’m just so overwhelmed,” she said. “No one else in the world has ever—ever—given me an entire container of cookies.” The phone at Andrea’s desk began ringing.

Andrea leaned over and kissed her softly on the cheek as she stood up. “Let’s talk more tonight, cookie monster,” she said, running to answer the phone.

Several hours later, Roy phoned that he was downstairs. Nigel was already in the town car with his bags, but Miranda would be riding to the airport with them to go over any last minute details.

As she took her coat and bag from Andrea, she stopped. “Would you mind not coming over tonight?”

“Sure—wait, not?”

“The girls are leaving tomorrow right from school. James is going to drive them up to Boston and...
stay a few days. I want to help them pack and everything,” she said.

“That’s fine. You don’t need to explain. I’ll plan on coming by tomorrow afternoon. Is Roy taking us or are we driving?”

“Why does it matter?”

“Well, not really. I can’t drive in heels, though.”

“Andrea you do not need to bring heels with you this week. I hope you realize I plan to be in pajamas or loungewear for the next ten days.”

Andrea smiled. “Okay. So does that mean I should not bring the 10” stilettos and sheer lingerie I have packed?” She watched as Miranda’s breath hitched and her thighs clenched.

“I hate you for that,” Miranda whispered, snatching her coat and heading for the elevators.

Roy did, indeed drive them the next afternoon, but they took Miranda’s BMW SUV and he drove her Volkswagen coupe back to the city.

“Miranda, this house is gorgeous,” Andrea said.

“It is, isn’t it? The townhouse is larger in terms of square footage—if you’re not counting the guest house out back here—but I love how open this is. Two floors, lots of natural light, and an ocean view.”

“You realize this looks like a Pottery Barn catalog, right?”

Miranda smiled. “Same interior designer,” she said, pulling a dustcover off the sofa. “Why don’t you help me uncover the furniture, and then I can run to the market while you vacuum. Sound like a plan?”

“Sure.”

For the next hour, Miranda showed Andrea around the house as they went around removing dust covers. Andrea carried them all to the laundry room off the kitchen, and true to her word, left them for Miranda to wash.

When Miranda returned from the market, Andrea was just finishing wiping down the kitchen floor. There were several candles lit throughout, and the place smelled fresh and clean with a tinge of salty ocean air. Miranda carried one bag of groceries inside, then recruited Andrea to help her with the rest.

“So, what are we having for dinner tonight? I’m starving,” Andrea said.

“Grilled chicken with asparagus. How does that sound?”

“Delicious,” Andrea said. “Can I help?”

“Nope. Just keep an eye on my phone for any messages from Nigel.”

“Can do,” Andrea said, taking a seat at the island so she could watch Miranda work.

“Have you received any more job offers, Andrea?” Miranda asked while she minced some garlic.
“No. Just those three assistant ones. I was going to follow-up again on a few next week.”

“Let me make some calls tomorrow first,” Miranda said.

“Are you that eager to get rid of me?”

Miranda set down the knife and looked up at Andrea. “I need you to start training a new assistant for me.”

“What? Already?”

Miranda nodded, then resumed cutting the ends off the asparagus.

“I have no doubt you will find a job before these babies are born, and when Emily comes back from Milan, if all goes well, Nigel will be offering her a promotion to Assistant Art Director. I will be losing you both.”

“But Miranda, I can stay. If it’s that important, I can stay in this job for a while longer.”

“No, darling, you can’t. You can’t be in both places.”

Andrea looked at her quizzically.

“I’m being selfish, I know,” she said.

“No, I get it,” Andrea said. “Not to be crass, but I’d rather be in your bed than fetching your coffee.”

“I couldn’t agree more.”

“I will start training a new assistant for you. But, can we have three people on your payroll?”

“That’s the other thing.”

“Uh-oh.”

“Well, it’s not bad—not entirely. Once you find someone, I was thinking I would ask you to cut down to twenty hours a week. We can pay the new assistant intern wage while you’re still here, and then bump her up to salary when you leave, that is, unless you leave us sooner.”

“Wow, you seem to have this all figured out.”

“But I would more than compensate you on the side, Andrea. As I said, it’s selfish of me, and I don’t want your income to drop because of this.”

“Okay,” Andrea said. “Okay, I’ll do it.”

Miranda placed the chicken breasts on the grill pan and they sizzled. “Good,” she said.

Several hours later, Andrea slipped into her pajamas and joined Miranda in the enormous bed in the master bedroom. “Are you feeling better?” she asked.

Miranda nodded. “I think I was just on my feet for too long earlier.”

Andrea grimaced as a pang of guilt washed over her for letting Miranda go grocery shopping and stand to cook dinner without taking a rest.
“Before you say anything,” Miranda said, “it was my own fault. I was just feeling so good and relaxed being here, I forgot that my body tends to speak for itself lately.”

“Can I draw you a bath? Or maybe rub your back?” Andrea offered.

“I’m really comfortable right now, actually. Maybe we can take a bath tomorrow.”

Andrea smiled at the thought and reached up to turn out the light. She leaned over and kissed Miranda.

“We don’t have to go to bed just yet. I mean, actually, can we talk about something?”

Andrea knew she really didn’t have a choice, but the last thing she wanted to do right now was talk more about how she’d train someone to take her job. Something about that was just too unsettling.

“I looked over that birth plan sheet that the doctor sent home.”

“Mm, anything good?”

“I think I really want to deliver them naturally,” she said.

“Really?”

“Yeah, I just feel so different with this pregnancy. I don’t know, giving birth is an experience I really want to have.”

“Wow, so you’re talking no drugs or anything, right?” Andrea said.

Miranda chuckled, “No, nothing. Do you think I’m crazy?”

“No at all,” Andrea said, reaching over and resting her hand on Miranda’s belly. “It sounds amazing, actually.”

“Of course, there’s a chance they’ll need to do an emergency c-section if there are complications, but I’d at least want to aim for doing it myself,” she said. “I was reading about a doula or midwife to help with the labor and delivery, too.”

“Oh,” Andrea said, retracting her hand. “Yeah, those are trendy now,” she said.

“Darling,” Miranda said cautiously, “a doula won’t replace you—you know that, right?”

Andrea’s eyes widened, confirming Miranda’s thoughts.

“Andrea, you need to stop this…this jealousy. It is highly unattractive. I simply do not have the time for this childish behavior.” Miranda clasped her hand over her mouth as soon as she said it, but it was too late. Andrea was already climbing out of bed.

“I’m sorry that you find me childish, Miranda,” she said over her shoulder. “I’ll be on the couch downstairs.”

“Andrea, wait! Please wait,” Miranda called after her, but the young woman did not turn around. Sighing, she quickly sat up and jumped out of bed. She staggered towards the door feeling unusually unsteady on her feet, and suddenly everything went black.

Hearing a loud thump, Andrea stopped midway down the stairs. “Miranda?” When there was no answer, she ran back up to the bedroom and found the woman on the floor next to the bed.
“Oh my god! Are you okay?” she asked, rushing to kneel next to the woman.

Miranda took a deep breath and pressed her palm to the carpet as she pushed herself up off the ground. “I’m fine. Go back to whatever you were doing.”

“But—you collapsed. Do you need me to call the doctor?”

“No. Fainting and dizziness is common with pregnancy. I wasn’t thinking and got up too fast. Really, I’m fine,” Miranda insisted as she pushed herself up onto her knees. She took another deep breath before standing to her feet. Pushing past the young woman, she walked out of the bedroom towards the stairs.

“Where are you going?” Andrea asked.

“Yes. When I was pregnant with the girls, the dizziness was much worse.”

“I’m sorry,” Andrea said. She moved away from the stairs and stood next to the counter. “You scared me—when I saw you on the floor like that—are you sure you’re okay?”

“Yes. When I was pregnant with the girls, the dizziness was much worse.”

“But when you fell—I mean, you’re not hurt?”

“No.”

“I’m sorry about before, Miranda,” she said. “Honestly, I don’t really know what a doula does, and I was too embarrassed to say so.”

Miranda looked up in surprise.

“I know, I know…childish,” she said.

“Andrea, I don’t expect you to know everything. You know that, right?”

She shrugged.

“No, I’m serious, Andrea.”

“I guess I’m just used to working for you and having to figure out what you’re talking about on my own.”

“What do you mean?”

“Seriously? You won’t tolerate people asking you for clarification. You ask for ‘that thing I saw at
that place I like’ and it’s my job to figure it out. And you wonder why I was too embarrassed to say anything when I didn’t know what a doula was?”

“But that’s just me at work. I hope you’ve noticed I’m not such an Ice Queen at home, when we’re layin’ together in bed.”

“I know, I guess it’s just hard to separate the two sometimes. I’m worried that if I get too comfortable around you, I won’t be able to stay professional at work.”

“Well, hopefully we won’t have to worry about that much longer,” Miranda said as she put the chip clip back on the bag of pretzels. She put the pretzels back in the pantry and placed the glass in the dishwasher, then walked over and placed her hands on Andrea’s shoulders. “I’m exhausted. Come back to bed?”

The next morning, Miranda woke, draped across Andrea’s body. She inhaled the young woman’s scent and softly nuzzled her neck.

“Mmm, good morning, beautiful,” Andrea whispered.

“Sweetheart, I’m sorry I was such a royal bitch last night.”

“Let’s just forget about last night, okay? You really scared me,” she said.

“I’m tougher than you think.”

“I know, I know, it’s just…you know, seeing you on the floor like that.”

“Okay, okay,” she said, resting her head on the younger woman’s shoulder. Her hand began tracing lazy circles along her body, and she gently brushed her fingertips across Andrea’s breast.

She gasped and wrapped her arm tightly around Miranda’s body. “Are you feeling better today?”

“Much,” she said, lifting her head and kissing her on the lips. “I don’t want to get out of bed, though.”

“Well, lucky for you, this is vacation and you don’t have to,” Andrea said.

“Oh, but you can’t be serious.”

“Why not?”

“Um, well, I was going to make some calls for you.”

“That can wait until Monday, can’t it?”

A devilish smile crept across Miranda’s lips. “This feels so…scandalous.”

Andrea laughed. “Like you’re playing hooky?”

“Yes. What will we do all day?”

“I think we’ll find something to keep us occupied,” she said.

The following morning, Andrea woke just after ten o’clock. Miranda was still asleep, snuggled against her pillow. Andrea quietly slipped out of bed and threw a robe on, then headed downstairs
to make coffee.

It was a rainy, grey morning. She had never quite realized it, but rain over the ocean was a much calmer phenomenon than rain splashing against the streets of the city. She pulled up Miranda’s email on the laptop just to make sure she hadn’t missed anything urgent, and then after switching the coffee pot on, she headed back upstairs.

Walking around to the other side of the bed, she softly leaned over and kissed Miranda on the forehead. “Good morning,” she whispered.

Miranda’s eyes fluttered open and she took a deep breath.

“I made us some coffee. I’m going to take a shower now,” she said.

“What time is it?” Miranda asked, covering her mouth as she yawned.

“Ten o’clock.”

“What?”

Andrea leaned over and kissed her softly on the lips. “I checked and you don’t have any messages, so relax.”

“You’re spoiling me, Andrea,” she whispered.

“You deserve it,” she said. “Just give me ten minutes.”

Miranda nodded as the young woman headed into the bathroom. She pulled herself up slowly and adjusted the pillows so she could recline against the headboard. The delicious aroma of strong coffee drifted through the house, and she felt herself craving a cup. Her doctor advised her to limit her caffeine intake during the pregnancy, but did say it was okay to have a cup of coffee every now and then. This morning, she would definitely welcome that.

She reached over to the nightstand and picked up her phone, sending James a quick message to ask how the girls were doing.

She received a response almost immediately: They’re fine. I’m just heading back to NYC now.

She scrolled through her contacts and dialed James’ parents house. “Hi Helen, it’s Miranda,” she said.

“Miranda, dear, how are you doing?”

“Good. Good. And yourself?”

“Oh, well we’re just having a great time here with the girls. They tell me you’re expecting, too?”

“I am,” Miranda said, smiling. “Twin girls—again. Sometime in July or August.”

“Well that’s just wonderful. Are you feeling okay? No morning sickness or anything?”

“No, I feel great. I’m nineteen weeks along and I really have no complaints. I actually decided to take a trip out to the Hamptons this week while the girls are off with you and George.”

“Good for you, Miranda. You need to relax, too.”
“I’m grateful the girls were still able to come visit this week.”

“Oh of course, anytime! We wish we lived closer so we could see them more often,” she said. “And don’t be a stranger once those baby girls are born. I know you don’t have family around here, so you are always welcome here.”

“Thank you, Helen. You have no idea how much that means to me. I promise we’ll send photos as soon as they’re born.”

“Perfect,” she said. “Cassidy is teaching Grandpa George how to check his email on the computer right now, actually.”

Miranda chuckled. “And let me guess, Caroline is reading a book?”

“Always.”

“Can you put her on the phone? I just want to say hello.”

“Of course! Here you are—it was good talking to you Miranda. Call me if you need anything, really. I love you sweetheart.”

“Thanks, take care and tell George I said hello as well.”

“Of course. Here’s Caroline.”

“Hi Mom,” she said.

“My darling daughter, how are you sweetheart?”

“Good. How are you? Are you in Sagaponack?”

“Yes, and it’s wonderful. Very relaxing.”

“Oh good. Are you sleeping a lot? I know you love sleeping when it’s rainy out,” she said.

“Actually I just woke up a few minutes ago, so yes, I am. And you probably won’t believe it, but I stayed in bed all day yesterday,” Miranda admitted.

“Whoa. Are you sure you’re feeling okay?”

Miranda chuckled. “Yes. I feel great today. I’ll probably go sit on the screened-in porch and read the papers this afternoon.”

“Is Andy there with you?”

“Yes, she is. Why?”

“Just wondering. I didn’t want you to be alone there, that’s all.”

“Andrea is actually taking very good care of me. She brought me breakfast, lunch, and dinner in bed yesterday,” Miranda said.

“Not fair. I’m totally making her bring me breakfast in bed next time she sleeps over.”

“No. Andrea is not our servant, Caroline.”

“But she’s your assistant, and she takes care of you.”
“She is my assistant at Runway, but as you know, she’s looking for a new job because she wants to be a reporter. When she comes over after work or on the weekends, she’s there because she’s mommy’s friend. And she takes care of me because she wants me to stay healthy so the babies can grow big and strong.”

“Well, can I at least ask her?”

“Yes, you can ask her politely,” Miranda said. “What’s Cass doing?”

“She’s upstairs with Grandpa showing him how to do stuff on the computer. Do you want me to get her?”

“No, it’s okay. Just tell her I called and said hi. I’ll call back again tomorrow or the next day.”

“Okay. Oh, and Mom?”

“Yes?”

“Don’t be mad, but Cass accidentally told Grandma about the babies, and Dad heard. He looked kind of mad or something.”

Miranda sighed. “It’s okay, baby. People are going to find out—it’s not a secret or anything. I’m sure your dad wasn’t mad. He was probably a little upset at me for not telling him first, but don’t worry. I promise he’s not mad at you or your sister.”

“Okay. Um, and Grandpa knows, too. He said we could help him make a gift for them this week.”

“Darling, it doesn’t matter who knows. I’m sure they’ll like whatever you make them.”

“Okay. Um, I gotta go. Grandma needs help washing dishes. Love you!”

“I love you too, darling. Tell your sister I love her too,” Miranda said.

“Okay, bye!”

She sighed as she ended the call. Helen and George were truly remarkable people, and they had always been so good to Miranda. The girls were their only grandchildren, and even when she and James were getting a divorce, Helen was kind and warm and accepting. She never judged her for having a career or working late hours, and she really became a sort of mother-figure for Miranda.

Miranda dialed James on the phone.

“Miranda?”

“Hi James. I know you’re driving—can you talk?”

“Sure, putting you on speakerphone,” he said. “What’s up?”

“I wanted to apologize for not saying anything to you first. It appears the girls have told you about my pregnancy.”

“Yeah, I was a little surprised, to be honest.”

“Well, I was, too. I certainly wasn’t planning it, but…”

“It’s okay. I get it. Are you still going through with the divorce then?”
“From Stephen?” Miranda asked.

“Yeah.”

“That’s already finalized. He’s living with one of his whores.”

“Oh, but, I thought—“

“No. It’s not Stephen’s.”

“Holy shit, Miranda. You were cheating on him?”

“Look, it wasn’t like that. He and I were already living separate lives. He was spending maybe one night a week at home.”

“Is that why you were keeping it quiet?” James asked.

“Well, I guess that was part of it. I was also hesitant to make any sort of announcement in case something happened. They keep pushing this “over forty” talk at me and it just kind of made me nervous.”

“Is everything okay?”

“Yes, surprisingly. Everything is wonderful. I’m feeling great, and I just love being pregnant this time around. I don’t know what it is.”

“What are you going to do about work?”

“Well, I imagine that’s why I feel so great—there’s hardly any pressure. I can use my extended leave that’s so expertly written into my contract, they have to hold my job indefinitely.”

“I almost forgot about that. God, I’m a good lawyer,” he said with a chuckle.

“An arrogant one, too.”

“Well, that comes with the territory. I’m glad things are working out for you. Do you mind if I ask if you’re seeing someone?”

“No, I don’t mind,” Miranda said. “But, that doesn’t mean I will give you a completely truthful answer. That part, I’m still not ready to talk about.”

“Fair enough. Do you at least have someone to help you out? Massage your feet or help you off the couch when you get stuck?”

“You make that sound so romantic,” she said. “And I’ll have you know I have yet to get ‘stuck’ as you say. That was one time, and I’m sure if you weren’t there, I would have been able to get up just fine.”

“Whatever. Keep telling yourself that,” he teased.

“I’ll have you know I’m really taking care of myself this time—lots of rest, light exercise, more rest. I’m at Sagaponack this week.”

“Oh, nice. Good, I’m happy for you. You never answered my question though—do you have someone to help you?”
M Miranda paused for a few moments before answering. “Yes.”

“Okay. Good. good,” he said. “I’m glad.”

“Yes. Well…I should let you go.”

“Yeah, I should get back to driving. Hey, call me if you need anything, okay?”

“You’re starting to sound like your mother, James.”

“Oh no, did she beg you to let her move in or something?”

“No—not yet anyway. Why?”

“You know she thinks of you as her adopted daughter. She probably brags to her lady friends about you more than me.”

“She does know we’re divorced, right?”

He laughed. “Yes. Yes, she does. If you want me to tell her to lay off, I will.”

“No,” Miranda said, perhaps a bit too eagerly. “I mean, I don’t mind, really. She’s a very kind woman and I know the girls love her so. I really don’t’ mind.”

“Okay, but let me know.”

“I will. Listen, I need to hang up and go to the bathroom,” she said. “Call me if the girls need anything.”

“I will. See ya.”

She tossed the phone onto the mattress next to her and got up, wrapping her robe around her as she headed down the hall to use the bathroom. When she returned to her room, Andrea was getting dressed.

“I’m going to take a quick shower now,” Miranda said. “Would you do me a huge favor and bring half a cup of coffee up here for me?”

“Sure. Just half?”

“Yeah, for now. Thank you, sweetheart,” she said, kissing Andrea softly on the lips. While she was fetching the coffee, Miranda stripped the sheets from the bed and tossed them in a pile. After spending the past thirty-six hours in bed, she definitely wanted fresh sheets.

The rest of the day was spent much like their previous day, only on the couch in the screened porch. It was cool in there, so Miranda was huddled beneath a blanket for much of the afternoon, although that didn’t keep Andrea’s hands away.

Miranda soon found that her favorite position was stretched out along the couch, leaning on Andrea. The young woman kept her feet propped up on the ottoman.

“Andrea, can I ask you a personal question?”

“Sure. Should I be nervous?”
“No, I don’t think so,” Miranda said, taking a deep breath. “Does your family know you’re here with me?” It took Andrea a few minutes to respond, and Miranda was grateful that this position didn’t allow her to see the young woman’s face.

“I told them I was going with Doug.”

“Who’s Doug?”

“This guy who I used to be friends with. When Nate and I broke up, he stopped talking to me.”

“What is the reason you decided to lie?”

“Jesus, Miranda. There’s no way out of your questions.”

“I’m sorry, it’s a habit. You don’t have to answer if you don’t want to,” she said.

“My mom is pretty easygoing. I mentioned a few weeks ago that I was in love with a woman, and she was a little surprised, but not upset.”

“Did you tell her who this other woman was? I mean, presuming you were referring to me?”

“Of course it’s referring to you. And no, I didn’t tell her.”

“Because you thought she would disapprove.”

“No. Actually, because the night I spoke with my mom was the same night you got upset about me not denying our relationship to Emily and Serena. The night you thought I left.”

Miranda turned around and placed her hands on Andrea’s shoulders. “Darling, I’m sorry. I was just overreacting. My mind was getting ahead of me,” she said, kissing her softly on the lips.

Andrea’s hands found Miranda’s hips & she eased her onto her lap. “It’s okay,” she said as she snaked her hands up across her belly and cupped her breasts.

Miranda rolled her hips against Andrea’s core and leaned forward to take her lips once again. “Ugh,” she groaned, pushing herself off her.

“What’s wrong?” Andrea asked, gently brushing her cheek.

“I have to pee—again,” Miranda said, rolling her eyes.

As Miranda was in the bathroom, Andrea pulled her phone out and saw a text message from Emily: Nigel, Serena, and I were thinking of giving Miranda a small baby shower next month. Since you’re ‘friends’ with her, do you think she would like that, or is it ridiculous?

Andrea quickly wrote back. You know, I think she would love it. Keep me posted. BTW, stop worrying and enjoy Milan.

“Are they emailing you from Milan?” Miranda asked, taking her seat on the couch again.

“Yeah, but it’s nothing,” she said. “I was thinking, where are the babies going to sleep once they’re born?”

“I really don’t know,” Miranda said. “I didn’t want to get ahead of myself. And I mean, it’s still early. I’m not even five months along.” She absentmindedly cradled her belly in her arms.
Andrea draped her arms over Miranda’s shoulders and kissed her softly on the cheek. “I’ll take good care of you. You just plan the nursery.”

Miranda smiled and leaned into her touch. “I guess they’ll have to go in the guest room,” she said. “But maybe they can stay in bassinets with us for a while,” she said.

“You’re really okay with me moving in?”

“Of course. Well, unless you’ve changed your mind.”

“No, no. It’s just, well, we haven’t talked about that. If I’m living with you, it’s going to be a lot harder to keep everything secret.”

Miranda nodded and took Andrea’s hand. “Next week, maybe we can invite Nigel for dinner. And I suppose we should talk to James, too, though I suppose he won’t care. I do want to keep it fairly quiet until you accept a job offer,” she said.

“Okay. That’s fair. And I love the idea of the babies sleeping in bassinets in your room.”

“Our room, darling.”

“Our room.”

“I love you, sweetheart,” Miranda said.

“I love you, too, Miranda. You and your girls.”

“Miranda, we need to go if you want to get home before the girls,” Andrea called from the front door. “Everything’s already in the car.”

“Can you come here for a minute?” Miranda called back.

Andrea sighed and set the keys down before taking the stairs two at a time. “Where are you?”

“Bathroom.”

She quickly ran into the bathroom and froze when she saw Miranda on the floor on her hands and knees. “What’s wrong?” she asked, kneeling next to the editor.

Miranda took a deep breath. “My back—sharp pains. Get me two Tylenol and a heating pad.”

Andrea nodded and retrieved the tablets from the medicine cabinet, then handed them to Miranda with a glass of water. “Where’s the heating pad?”

“Hall closet.”

Thirty seconds later, she was plugging the electric pad into the nearest outlet and pressing it to Miranda’s lower back. “What else can I do?” she asked, gently stroking her back.

Miranda took another deep breath. “Come sit in front of me. Distract me until the Tylenol kicks in.”

“Are you sure you’re okay—that this isn’t contractions or something serious? Didn’t the doctor tell you to call her if your pain lasted more than a few seconds?”
“Contractions peak and subside, and this isn’t doing that. I have an appointment on Monday, I’ll ask her then.”

“Is it more comfortable kneeling like that?”

“Yes. I think I’ve been neglecting my pelvic exercises and my growing,” she paused and grimaced for a second before continuing, “my growing belly is putting too much strain on my lower back.” She gently began rocking her hips slowly.

“What does it feel like?” Andrea asked.

“Distract, Andrea. That means talk about something else.”

“Right, sorry. So, um, the girls texted and they’re on the train on their way home. Roy will be picking them up from the airport, and Emily already made sure the townhouse was cleaned and that the fridge was stocked for when you return.”

“Keep going,” Miranda said, taking another deep breath as she gently rocked back and forth.

“Okay, Nigel said Milan went wonderfully. The party was a success, and Irv even had some nice things to say about you. Apparently he apologized for your absence, explaining that he had been overworking you and you were taking a much-needed vacation. Nigel said he told everyone that you insisted you could take your trip another week, but he would not let you.”

“I didn’t tell you to make things up, Andrea,” Miranda said with a chuckle.

“I’m not! Nigel sent me a long email—you can read it in the car.”

“I was just teasing. I believe you, darling. Have you heard any more about a job?”

“No. I followed up with Moira and Joanne on Tuesday after you phoned them, but nothing so far. It’s okay. I still need to find a replacement and train her. Oh, I meant to ask, do you know if Emily will be getting that promotion after all?”

“Yes. Nigel told her yesterday, but she will slowly transition over the next month or so.”

“Okay, so I will ideally be finding two new assistants for you. HR emailed me a bunch of resumes, but I haven’t looked through them yet. If only I could clone myself…”

“If you had a clone, I would want you both to myself,” Miranda said. She took a few more deep breaths, then sat back on her heels.

“Better?”

“Yes. Help me up,” she said, reaching out her hand.

Andrea helped ease her into a standing position, and led her to the chaise in the bedroom. “Let me rub your back for a few minutes. Tell me if it’s uncomfortable.”

Miranda turned and rested her head against the backrest while Andrea’s palms applied pressure to her lower back. Nearly twenty minutes later, Miranda felt wonderful, though she could tell the young woman’s massage had lost its strength. She turned and kissed her—first on the lips, then on the palms of her hands. “Thank you,” she said. “I think we can go now.”

“Anything we need to bring with? It’ll be a two-hour ride,” Andrea said as they walked down the stairs.
“No, but I will need to get out and stretch at some point, okay?”

“Sure. Did you want to lay down in the backseat?”

“I’ll be fine,” Miranda said, grabbing a throw pillow from the nearby couch.

Once situated in the car, Miranda placed the throw pillow on her lap, wedging it beneath her belly. Andrea leaned over the center console and kissed her. “Thank you for bringing me here this week. Did you have a nice vacation?”

Miranda grinned and nodded. “It was blissful,” she said. “Part of me wishes we could just stay here forever.”

“I know what you mean,” Andrea said as she started the car.

“I’m sorry, Andrea.”

“For what?”

“Hiding you. Not telling anyone, not wanting to be photographed with you. You must know I wouldn’t do this if there was another way.”

Andrea kept her eyes on the road and reached out to grab Miranda’s hand. “I understand. If it were different, you wouldn’t be you. And I like you just how you are.”

Miranda smiled. “Mind if I close my eyes for a while?”

“Not at all. What do you want on the radio?”

“Your choice. Not talk radio.”

Andrea turned the station and Miranda quickly drifted off to sleep.

They had been driving for over an hour, and Miranda was still sound asleep. Andrea smiled, thinking about their future. Suddenly, another car pulled in front of her, causing her to slam on the breaks and swerve to the shoulder, instinctively reaching her hand out to keep Miranda’s body from propelling forward.

“I’m sorry,” she said as soon as the car came to a stop. She was shaking, and the sound of horns on the road wasn’t helping to settle her nerves.

“Are you okay?” Miranda asked.

“Yeah, you?”

“Yes. Don’t apologize. I should be thanking you for safely avoiding a collision. Do you want to switch?”

Her eyes widened. “Really?”

“Only if you want. I trust you to drive us home, but you just seem a bit jumpy now.”

“I’ll be okay.” Andrea took a deep breath and pulled back onto the road. “You feeling okay? Did you need to stretch?”
“I’ll go for a walk once we get home. I’m actually fine right now,” Miranda said. “This is going to sound crazy—and don’t you dare repeat it to anyone—but I honestly have no desire to go back to work.”

“Maybe you’ll change your mind when you’re home by yourself because the girls are in school and I’m at work.”

“True. I do really want to start handing over some of my responsibilities to Nigel…permanently.”

“Like what?”

“Well, for starters, the tasks that are truly his job as Art Director: final approval of layouts, choosing models, overseeing cover shoots, seasonal spreads. Honestly, he should be reviewing the Book, too.”

“I can have it arranged to get sent to both of you for a while if you’d like,” Andrea said.

“No, no. I can’t just throw that on him. He will have no chance at a personal life.”

“Maybe with Emily’s promotion, he can let go of some of the smaller things that take up his time, like overseeing the Closet. Emily would actually be great for that, you know. She knows it inside and out, and she knows the designers’ lines by heart.”

Miranda nodded. “That’s true. I’ll have to talk to Nigel first, though. We’ve been so busy with Milan, I haven’t had a chance to sit and talk with him in quite some time.”

“Let’s have him over for dinner tomorrow!” Andrea said, “Oh. No, never mind. I’m sorry.”

“Why?”

“He doesn’t know about us. And you probably want to talk to him alone, anyway.”

“I’m sure he has his suspicions but is too loyal to speak them. What if we invite him and his boyfriend?” Miranda said.

“They broke up last month. I think he’s still single.”

“Oh gosh, I had no idea. Well, let’s have the four of us and Nigel. That will be fine. The girls haven’t seen him in a while.”

“Sounds perfect,” Andrea said. She turned down Miranda’s street and saw the townhouse parked out front.

“Crap, they got home before us,” Miranda said, pinching the bridge of her nose.

“It’s okay. I’m sure Roy helped them inside and they’re getting settled.”

Andrea climbed out of the car and grabbed Miranda’s duffle bag from the back. As she walked around to the sidewalk, she saw Miranda crouched down, squatting next to the car with her hands on the seat. “What’s wrong?” she asked, quickly dropping the bag and crouching next to her.”

“Pain, again…damn it!” she said.

Andrea firmly pressed the heel of her hand into Miranda’s lower back.

“Harder,” Miranda whispered.
“Can you use your hand to support your belly and lift it up at all? At least until you get inside?”

She reached down and took a deep breath, slowly standing back up. “It feels better,” she said.

Andrea threw the duffle over her shoulder and guided Miranda into the house and to the sofa. “I’ll be right back. Can I get you anything?”

Miranda shook her head, and Andrea headed back outside to move the car into the garage and bring in the remaining bags.

“Come lay with me for a minute,” Miranda said. Andrea curled up along the couch with her. Miranda took her hand and placed it on her belly. “They’re both kicking like crazy.”

“Wow,” Andrea said, gently nuzzling Miranda’s neck.

“See,” Caroline snickered from the doorway. “Told you she was Mom’s girlfriend.”

Andrea quickly jumped off the couch, and the bounce of the cushions caused Miranda to grunt. She looked over apologetically. “Hi, Caroline, Cassidy. Did you have a nice trip?”

Miranda pushed herself into a sitting position with a groan. “What Andrea meant to say is, yes, she is mommy’s girlfriend. And I missed you so much this week—I want to know everything,” she said with a smile.

The girls ran to hug Andrea and Miranda, each taking a seat next to Miranda on the couch, and each placing their hands on one side of Miranda’s belly. “Is that her kicking, Mom?”

“Yes, baby. They’re both very excited to be home, I think.”

Cassidy looked up at Andrea who was still standing next to the couch. “Here Andy,” she said, standing up and taking her hand. “You sit next to Mom. I’ll sit on your lap.”

Andrea smiled and quickly took the seat, pulling Cassidy into a hug on her lap. She reached down and took Miranda’s hand, squeezing it tightly.

“I love you,” Miranda whispered, barely audible.

“Love you, too,” Andrea mouthed back with a dreamy look in her eyes.

“Miranda is that you?” an older woman called from the foyer. Her eyes widened and she looked to her girls.

“Oh, sorry. We forgot to tell you Grandma came back with us and is staying the night.”

Before Miranda could piece together a coherent thought, Helen appeared in the doorway. “Oh my, I see you have company.”

Miranda gently pushed the girls aside and stood to greet Helen, wrapping her arms around her. “It’s so good to see you,” she said. “You haven’t been waiting long, have you?”

“No, your driver dropped us off less than an hour ago. Who is that,” she asked, looking over Miranda’s shoulder at the couch, “beautiful young woman? She works for you?”

“Well, yes, actually,” Miranda stammered.

“It’s Andy!” Caroline said.
“She’s mom’s girlfriend!” Cassidy added.

Miranda shrugged and nodded.

“Miranda, James didn’t tell me you were gay,” she said quietly.

“I’m not,” she said. “I mean, I guess—James doesn’t know. This is a recent development.” She blushed and bit her lip. “Helen, this is Andrea Sachs. Andrea, the girls’ paternal grandmother. Um, Andrea has been staying here, too.”

Now it was Andrea’s turn to blush as she stood and greeted Helen.

“Oh come here,” the older woman said, pulling Andrea into a tight hug. “If you break Miranda’s heart, you’ll have to deal with me, you know.”

Andrea smiled. “I don’t think you have to worry,” she said, taking Miranda’s hand.

“How long are you staying, Helen? Of course, you’re welcome to stay as long as you wish, but I was going to invite someone to join us for dinner tomorrow, and I’m hoping you can join.”

“I was going to head back tomorrow, but I can take a later train. I really just wanted to see how you were doing. I’m not as concerned now, knowing this young woman is here to look after you.”

Miranda smiled and quietly excused herself, heading upstairs.

“Andy, is Mom feeling okay?” Cassidy asked.

“Yeah. Sure. The babies are growing a lot, so sometimes it hurts when her body has to stretch so they can fit inside. But we had a really nice week at your house in the Hamptons, and your mom was able to get a lot of rest,” she said. “So, I don’t know about you, but we haven’t had anything to eat since breakfast and I’m starved!”

Caroline and Cassidy giggled and nodded in agreement.

“Why don’t the girls and I fix something in the kitchen, and you can go check on Miranda?” Helen suggested.

Andrea nodded and headed upstairs, finding Miranda curled up on her bed. Andrea sat next to her on the bed. “Your back again?”

“Mm-hmm,” Miranda groaned. “It never really went away. I don’t want the girls to see me like this.”

“They asked me how you were feeling. Will you feel up to coming downstairs for something to eat?”

“Yes, of course. I took two more Tylenol. I can hardly feel it when I’m laying down, it’s just sitting and standing.”

“Hold on,” Andrea said, getting up and heading into the closet. She came back with a small package. “I ordered this back when I ordered your pillow. They make a bunch of other types,” she said as she pulled an elastic band out of the box. “Some go all the way up over your shoulders, but this is supposed to help hold your belly up and keep pressure off your cervix.”

“Oh my gosh, why didn’t you tell me about this earlier?” Miranda asked as she stood and put the band on.
“Does it feel better?”

“Yes,” Miranda said, sighing in disbelief. “It actually does.”

Andrea wrapped her arms around her growing waistline and pulled Miranda in for a kiss. After a few seconds, she pulled away. “If we go any further, I don’t think we’ll make it for lunch,” she said, kissing Miranda softly on the nose.

The five women spent the afternoon eating the delicious salads and tea sandwiches Helen made. Miranda told the girls all about her week off, from long walks along the beach to breakfasts, lunches, and dinners in bed.

“Nigel, how are you?” Miranda asked, opening the door and letting him inside.

“Miranda, you look fabulous,” he said, taking her hand and twirling her around a little bit.

“Oh please, I practically live in wrap dresses these days, but thank you,” she said. “I’m glad you were able to make it tonight. I think we have a lot to catch up on.”

“Hi Nigel,” Andrea said, greeting him in the kitchen.

“Six—I wasn’t expecting you. Everything go okay last week without us?”

“Perfectly,” she said with a smile.

“Uncle Nigel!!” the girls cried, running down the stairs and hugging him tightly.

“Hey! I heard you were at your grandparents house this week? Did you have fun?”

“Yes! And Grandma came back with us to see Mom,” they said, dragging Nigel further into the kitchen. “Grandma! This is Uncle Nigel. Mom works with him.”

“Helen, nice to see you again,” Nigel said, extending his hand.

“You know each other?” Cassidy exclaimed.

“Yes, sweet pea. I met Mr. Kipling long ago when you and your sister were first born,” she said, “and I don’t think he’s aged one day since then.”

Nigel blushed. “Well, I brought some sparkling lemonade,” he said, placing the bottle on the counter. “What can I help with?”

Several hours later, Andrea joined the girls and their grandma in the living room to watch a movie while Miranda and Nigel headed upstairs to the study.

Miranda rearranged a few pillows on the couch and reclined back. “Nigel, I hope you don’t mind,” she said.

“No, of course. Can I get you anything?”

“No, I’m fine. Please help yourself to a drink, though. There’s Macallan in the decanter.”

“Well, thanks, don’t mind if I do.” He poured himself two fingers of the amber liquid and sat in the chair next to the couch. “You didn’t miss anything in Milan. It was really quite boring,” he said.
“So about that—I honestly can’t tell you how much I enjoyed my week off. At first, I worried what I was going to do all day, but after spending something like thirty-six hours in bed and the rest of the day taking long walks along the beach or curling up on the couch, I really have very little desire to get back to work.”

“Wait, Miranda, you can’t mean—”

“No. I’m not ready to give it up just yet. But I did want to speak with you about giving you more responsibility—responsibility that is rightfully yours.”

“What do you mean?”

“When was the last time you checked your job description?”

“Oh, I haven’t looked since I was first hired. My god, they didn’t even use computers back then, Miranda. So much has changed.”

“I know,” she said. “Part of my job is to update the job descriptions of my staff each year. Your most recent is on file with HR. I haven’t changed much, just added some things to encompass the intricacies and speed of digital publishing. My point, however, is that over the past twenty years, I seem to have usurped the majority of your responsibilities.”

Nigel was shocked. “Miranda, I don’t mind. Really. I know you’ll make it up to me someday.”

“Well Nigel, I’m hoping things can start to change now, for two reasons, mostly selfish. For one, this pregnancy is taking a toll on me and I simply cannot put in the long hours like I used to. Even once the babies are born, I know I will need time to get myself together again. Also, there’s the issue of my retirement, if I should be so lucky to not be ousted first.”

“What? Miranda, you can’t be serious!”

“Relax. I’m talking ten years down the road. But even so, I want to make sure you feel comfortable and confident stepping into my shoes—or anyone’s really. Should you so choose.”

“Wow. Um, okay. Yes. Yes, Miranda, I’ll do whatever you need.”

“No. I don’t want you thinking of it as doing me a favor. Or doing this because I asked you. It’s your job. It’s always been your job, but I just wanted my hands on everything. You know, the higher up you go, the less day-to-day work there is to do. Part of my role as editor-in-chief is selecting a competent staff that I trust completely to produce the caliber of work that Runway is known for. I selected you long ago to be my Art Director, and I would do the same today.”

“What exactly are you handing over—or, back, I guess—to me, if I may ask?” he said.

“Final approval on all layouts and seasonal spreads. Cover shoots, model selection,” she paused, “run-throughs. I will continue to be present in the run-throughs, and I will still review the Book electronically for a while, but if you’d like, I can have it sent to you as well. We will still have our monthly meetings where we all can collaborate and identify trends and features.”

“But—what will you do?” he asked.

“Nigel, you act as if that’s all I do at work. Most of my time is spent in planning meetings—planning the future of the magazine, subscription models, ways to monetize what others are giving away for free on the internet. I submit the final budget for our publication, which as you know partly determines the location and extravagance of our shoots. There is a lot of behind-the-scenes
work to my job.”

“Since when have you been in favor of ‘behind-the-scenes?’” he asked.

“I don’t think I ever was. I liked being able to do everything, and if I had my choice right now, I would probably choose a role like Serena’s—making an impact, but being able to go home at night and live my life.”

“Fifty years old and you finally decide to settle down?”

Miranda blushed. “Well, yes, actually. Although it sounds terribly boring when you put it like that.”

“So, just you and the girls or is there someone else in the picture?” he asked.

Miranda sat up. “I will answer your question, but please excuse me for just a minute,” she said.

Nigel nodded, and Miranda waddled out of the study and downstairs.

“Andrea,” she called.

The brunette hopped off the couch and met Miranda in the hall. “Everything okay?”

“Yes. How would you feel about telling Nigel about us?”

“Oh, um, tonight?”

“Yes, right now. I didn’t want to say anything without you there.”


“Wonderful. I just have to pee first—give me a minute.”

Andrea grabbed a bottle of water from the fridge, then followed Miranda back up the stairs.

“Sorry,” Miranda said, taking a seat on the sofa again. “These babies are pressing on my bladder.”

Andrea sat down on the couch next to her. “Hey Nige.”

“What’s going on?” he asked.

“Before I got up to use the bathroom, we were talking about me settling down, and you asks if there was someone else in the picture,” she said. “Well, yes, actually. There is.” She reached down and squeezed Andrea’s hand. “Andrea,” she said.

Nigel’s eyes widened. “Wait—you mean—wow. I mean, what am I saying, geez. I love you two!”

Andrea smiled and rested her head on her shoulder. “Nigel, we’d prefer if you didn’t say anything just yet. I’m still trying to find a writer position somewhere, and of course, Irv doesn’t know.”

“Yes, of course,” he said. “Wow. I’m so happy for you, Miranda.”

The following week at the office was relatively quiet. Andrea was busy interviewing new assistants. Miranda was feeling much better once she started wearing the maternity belt, and she actually found she was less tired than she was earlier in the pregnancy.
She had her twenty-week appointment on Monday and everything was progressing beautifully, according to Dr. Assaf. The babies were each just shy of one pound, and the doctor assured Miranda that the belly and back pain she was experiencing was round ligament pain and not contractions, as her cervix was still fully closed. She suggested some exercises to strengthen her pelvic floor, and advised Miranda to wear the maternity support belt for no longer than eight hours a day, as it could cause her body to rely on it too much and actually weaken the muscles she would need for childbirth.

Miranda explained that she had been thinking more about her birth plan and decided on a natural childbirth. Because it was a high-risk pregnancy, there would be a higher chance she would need an emergency cesarean, so Dr. Assaf strongly advised her to use one of the birthing suites at New York Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medical Center with its state-of-the-art surgical center and NICU. Not that she anticipated complications, but she explained to Miranda that she wanted her to be in the best possible place. Weill Cornell was one of the few hospitals in the area to allow midwives, and Dr. Assaf gave Miranda a list of several she had worked with recently that she recommended.

Miranda convinced Helen to stay for a few weeks, and she agreed only if Miranda would give Cara the two weeks off, which Miranda was happy to offer. Andrea didn’t spend the night again after Saturday night, and while Miranda was curious, she didn’t have time to dwell on it, as Helen kept everyone busy. Miranda secretly loved the extra attention from Helen, and it often made her wish her own mother could have been there for her these past thirty years.

On Thursday, Andrea received a call from Adam Moss’s assistant at New York magazine, explaining that Adam had a chance to look over her portfolio and was interested in meeting with her. Andrea was floored—Adam was the Editor, and New York had just won a slew of awards the past year. She eagerly accepted the interview, and scheduled it for the following day, Friday, April 11.

The next day, Andrea spoke with Human Resources and hired Rachel Woodruff as the new second assistant. She would start immediately on Monday April 14, and would be compensated at a base hourly pay for the initial two-week training period, which was strictly limited to eight hours per day, forty hours per week. Andrea spent the rest of her day putting together a training program, complete with all the necessary information Rachel would need to learn. Promptly at 4:10 PM, Andrea stood from her desk, whispered something into Emily’s ear, then headed out.

“Hi, Andy Sachs to see Adam Moss. I have a 4:30 interview.”

“Oh, yes, hello, Ms. Sachs. We spoke on the phone. I’m Carla, Adam’s assistant. He’s on a call right now, but should be ready for you shortly, she said as she reached to take Andrea’s coat. “Can I get you anything while you wait?”

“No, I’m fine. Thank you, Carla.”

“Of course. And Ms. Sachs, I must say I love your shoes. I saw those online at Bergdorfs—Charlotte Olympia Monroe Slingback, right?”

“Yes,” Andrea said, blushing slightly as she twisted her ankle. “These are way more comfortable than Louboutins, I have to say.”

“Oh my god, I would die for a pair of Christian Louboutins!” Carla exclaimed.

Andrea smiled. “Have you ever been to Century 21 in Brooklyn? They have some steep discounts on pumps.”
“No, I’ll have to check that out. Thanks, Ms. Sachs.”

“Please, call me Andy.”

She smiled. Several minutes later, she stood and approached Andrea. “Ms. Sachs—I mean, Andy—Adam is ready to see you. Please follow me.”

“Ms. Sachs, pleasure to meet you,” he said, extending his hand.

For a split second, Andrea was shocked at how good-looking he was. He looked as if he was a middle-aged model, plucked from the pages of Details or something. Thick, salt-and-pepper hair was piled on his head in a messy, but contained sort of way. His thick-rimmed glasses and baby blue eyes sparkled, and his velvet Dolce & Gabbana jacket made her want to reach out and pet him.

“Yes,” she said, returning her focus to the interview. “Mr. Moss, the pleasure’s mine. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me,” she said, not missing a beat.

“Ms. Sachs, I won’t deny that you name has been circling lately. You are apparently highly recommended by Miranda Priestly herself.”

Andrea blushed and looked down at her hands folded in her lap. “A fact I’m still struggling to comprehend. She really has been an incredible mentor.”

“Yes, I’m sure. But strangely enough, she has not sent such recommendation over to us here at New York magazine. We received your portfolio five or six weeks ago, and it wasn’t until I ran into David Reedman at a charity event last week that I learned of her regard for you.”

“Oh, um, I’m sorry, but I’m not in a position to explain Miranda’s actions,” Andrea said.

“Nor should you have to. I just wanted to meet you for myself and see what you have to offer.”

Andrea’s eyes widened. “Thank you. I appreciate that.”

“So, I really only have two questions for you, but we can talk about anything you’d like. I’m not going to ask things like your strengths or weaknesses or what you do when you’re in a difficult situation. That might work for an hourly employee, but not for my writers and editors. I need to know what makes them tick, how their mind works, you know,” he said. “So, first question: When did you know that you were a writer?”

Andrea took a deep breath. “In sixth grade, we learned how to diagram sentences. For the first time in my life, I felt like this sentence written on the chalkboard with its linear diagram reflected the language inside my head. I’m highly logical, and from a young age, I embraced the economy of words. I fell in love with the English language—which of course led me to study other languages, German, French, Spanish—and have since been in awe of the emotion that can be conveyed through rearranging somewhat common words in a different pattern. I contributed some short articles to my junior high publication, but in high school, I wasn’t part of the paper. No one read my high school paper, and the teacher in charge of it was very unsupportive in terms of new ideas. In college, though, I found a different situation. As young adults, we were suddenly interested in what was going on in the world, and I contributed many times. My senior year, I was editor of The Daily Northwestern. I loved knowing that our editorial choices, our perspective was sometimes the only perspective some people got about some of these issues. College students don’t watch the news all day long. For the most part, they don’t have time to think about much more than their class assignments and projects. It was pretty empowering knowing that we were responsible for keeping most of the students in touch with the world.”
“Excellent,” he said. “I read your piece on the janitors’ unions. That’s solid reporting, Ms. Sachs.”

“Thank you, and please, call me Andy.”

“So, Andy,” he continued, “why Runway?”

Andrea smiled. “Even though I anticipated this question, I’m afraid I don’t have the perfect answer,” she said. “I was desperate, and I submitted my application to every single newspaper from the Times to the Village Voice. When that didn’t pan out, I began applying to magazines, hoping to gain some sort of experience that could help me get my foot in the door at a newspaper. I met with Human Resources at Elias Clarke and at the time, there were two openings—Runway or Auto Universe. I hadn’t heard of either, though the title of the latter suggested it was about cars. I took the interview at Runway, and honestly my life has been a whirlwind since then. I was supposed to interview with Miranda’s assistant, but by some fluke, Miranda walked in and wanted to interview me herself. It was hardly an interview. She wouldn’t even touch the C.V. that I set on her desk. I tried to tell her about my experience as editor in college, and she did this thing where she flicks her fingers at me, signaling for me to leave. She was judging me by my looks—my hair was frizzy and I was wearing a tweed jacket with no shape from Casual Corner. I was so appalled that she hadn’t even considered me, I told her just what I thought. And then left. I was so humiliated, I just wanted to crawl into a hole. To my surprise, she sent her assistant down to the lobby to bring me back upstairs and hired me on the spot. At first, I had all these thoughts about maintaining my integrity and not becoming another fashionista roaming the halls of Runway. But one day, it kind of hit me that in order to be successful in life, you often have to look the part. Not that you need to wear designer labels to work for a fashion magazine, but more like you have to carry yourself with an air of sophistication and snobby confidence to be recognized. It isn’t that much different than what Aristotle argues about disguising your language based upon your audience, and when I realized that, I didn’t feel as if I were letting myself down so much as I was making myself heard. No, I wasn’t a fashionista, but I deserved to be there just as much as anyone else. And that, I guess, is why I chose to stay at Runway. Not to mention that working for Miranda instills the fear of blacklisting in you from day one,” she added with a chuckle.

“Did Miranda ever threaten to fire you?”

“There were a few times that she insinuated if I didn’t complete the task sufficiently, my services would no longer be needed, but I mean, that comes with any job. If you don’t do your job correctly and don’t perform up to standards, you risk losing said job. It’s just that Miranda’s standards are incredibly higher than most.”

“And yet she never fired you? I hear there are some days she fires half her staff in one go.”

“That’s not true. She does have high standards, but she always lets you know if you’re not meeting her expectations. Some people simply don’t have it in them to work any harder, and then, well, working for Miranda probably isn’t the best fit. She pushes each and every one of her staff to do better than they ever thought possible.”

“Well surely, you remember last fall when she fired the entire accessories department?”

“Miranda relies on her staff to bring fresh, creative ideas. The industry is built on being the first to identify trends—much like newspapers strive to be the first to break a story. When the staff becomes to comfortable, they don’t take risks and they don’t look outside the box, which is by definition the very essence of their role.”

“So, I’m not going to get you to criticize Miranda Priestly on the record, am I?”
Andrea grinned. “She’s a bitch. She’s ruthless, and she will do whatever it takes to survive. Happy? She’s also an incredible mother to her children, and a very thoughtful and kind woman.”

Adam smiled. “Do you have any questions for me?”

“Actually, yes. Which position am I interviewing for? I really don’t want to waste any more of your time if this is a lateral move for me.”

“I completely understand, and, no, this would not be an assistant role. To be perfectly honest, we have one staff writer position open at the moment, though in the next few months we will have a few additional, slightly better positions. I still have a few other candidates to meet with before we can best decide who would fit where and formally make an offer.”

“Excellent, thank you.”

“Anything else?” he asked.

“No,” she said, standing and reaching out to shake his hand.

“Andy, are you free on Sunday evening?” Adam asked.

Andrea’s heart began racing. He couldn’t be asking her—no—it couldn’t be.

“I’m only asking because my boyfriend Daniel and I are having a small gathering at our home, and I’d love for you to join us. There will be a few other writers and editors from the magazine there, and I’d love for them to meet you, as well.”

Andrea sighed in relief. “I would love to, thank you,” she said.

“Of course. Carla can send you the details. Look forward to seeing you,” he called as she headed out of her office and back to the front desk.

Once Andrea left the building, she hailed a cab back to her apartment, still reeling from the unusual interview and ensuing invitation. She was relieved to learn that Adam had a boyfriend, but was concerned that he had something against Miranda.

When she got upstairs, she let herself into her apartment tossed her bag on the ground, walking over to the bedroom to change out of her clothes. Just then, she saw Miranda curled up on her side, fast asleep on Andrea’s bed.

Andrea quietly slipped out of her shoes, then curled up behind her in bed.

“Andrea?” Miranda said, waking and turning onto her back.

“Shh, yes, it’s just me. Go back to sleep.”

Miranda shook her head and propped herself up against the headboard. “Why didn’t you tell me about the interview? Or Rachel? And why haven’t you been over all week?”

“I’m sorry,” she said, burying her face in Miranda’s neck. “I don’t know why.”

“Is it because Helen is staying here? She can go back at any time, you know.”

“No, that’s not it at all. I just kind of got nervous. Someone’s going to find out about us and it will be a mess,” Andrea said.
“Oh, darling, please don’t worry about that,” she said, gently stroking Andrea’s back. “So tell me about your interview.”

“How did you know?”

“Emily told me.”

“What? I told her not to tell anyone.”

“Apparently she’s more afraid of me than of you. Who was it with?”

“Adam Moss.”

“Really?” Miranda asked as she pulled back in shock.

“Yes. Why are you surprised?”

“Oh, well, I haven’t spoken to him in twenty some years, that’s all.”

“What happened between you two?”

“Why did something have to ‘happen?’”

“I know you, and there’s something you’re not telling me. Plus, he was really trying to get me to cut you down in the interview.”


“So?”

“Fine. Back in 1980, which was well before you were even born, I was working as a Junior Editor at Runway. I had only been at the magazine for a year, and I was seeing Daniel Kaiser, a copyeditor, on and off. I don’t even remember all the details, but he certainly wasn’t my boyfriend. We just happened to be photographed together a few times, and there was a rather incriminating picture of him leaving my apartment in the early hours of the morning that made it onto Page Six. The next day, I received a call from Adam, who was working at Rolling Stone at the time, and he accused me of having an affair with his boyfriend and demanded that I stop seeing him. I was rather appalled that he thought it appropriate to pick up the phone and call me, but Daniel was nothing to me, so I had no problem backing away. I certainly didn’t want to be caught up in their relationship, that’s for sure.”

“So, this Daniel…that’s the same Daniel he’s still with?” Andrea asked.

“Yes, they’ve been together since then. Why?”

“Ughhh,” Andrea groaned. “Adam invited me to a dinner party Sunday evening at their place. Daniel will be there.”

“Well, darling, it’s not like you have to walk up to him and introduce yourself as my girlfriend or anything,” Miranda said.

“I know. But Adam was just so damn interested in you. I’m sure Daniel will be the same. I wish I could bring you as my date.”

Miranda laughed. “That would be perfect. Are you going to their party?”
“Yeah. He basically told me there were a few positions open—one for staff writer and a few editorial positions that would be open in the coming months. He seemed impressed with me, and I got the impression that this dinner party would be my sort of final impression with the other staff.”

“Well yes, that sounds like a wonderful opportunity. Did he say which sections he was considering you for, or do you not care?”

“Honestly, I’ll write about anything.”

“Do you mind my asking what you said about me?”

“I tried to be honest. He told me you didn’t send a recommendation to him, so I was already suspicious of your relationship. I didn’t want to come across as defending you too much. I basically told him what I thought of you at first, but then how I came to realize you did what you had to do, and that I’m grateful to have you as a mentor.”

“Andrea, I need to point out that he may just be offering you a position to get back at me, since he knows you’re one of my employees and that I’m personally recommending you elsewhere.”

“Yeah, I know. I’m okay with that. I mean, it doesn’t matter, right?”

“Well, if we do come out, what will he say then?”

“Oh shit. I guess he would be one of the few who would have the balls to fire Miranda Priestly’s girlfriend, huh?”

“Probably.”

“Well, let’s just wait and see if I’m offered a position and what the details are,” Andrea said.

“Okay. When will your last day at Runway be?”

“What? Oh, I didn’t plan that yet.”

“Now that you’re training a new assistant, I need to give Irv a heads-up when he sees changes to our expenditures.”

“So, Rachel agreed to a two-week training period at base hourly pay, forty hours per week. I should be able to have her up to speed by then. Then, I was thinking—“

“I could move Emily to Nigel’s team, and Rachel could fill Emily’s role while you work on training someone else.”

“Exactly. Would that work? If not, I could give my two weeks and Rachel can replace me. Whichever.”

“I will talk with Irv. I think it will be best if I switch you to contractor effective immediately. You can be responsible for training new assistants, and I can arrange for Elias Clarke to pay a portion of your fee, while I would supply the rest.”

“Whatever, I trust you. Would anything be different?”

“I think you would have to forfeit your insurance coverage. I can make sure you are covered through a temporary plan until you find a job. As long as you don’t have any substantial medical costs, it shouldn’t be a problem.”
“Not a problem. Listen, I’m starving. Will you stay for dinner?”

“I’m here all night. James and Helen took the girls to dinner, and then a play. I actually think they’re going to stay with James this weekend.”

“Perfect,” Andrea said.

Sunday evening’s dinner party actually went really well. They lived in a loft in SoHo, and it was a gorgeous space. Adam introduced Andrea to several other staff writers and they all seemed so down-to-earth. The exact opposite of Runway gatherings. Towards the end of the night, Daniel approached her as she was admiring some of their artwork. She thanked him for his generosity in hosting that evening, and Daniel said how highly Adam spoke of her after their interview.

“So you work for Miranda Priestly right now?” he asked, quieter.

Andrea nodded.

“She’s an old friend of mine. Well, not old, but you know, we knew each other long ago. I hear she’s pregnant, is that true?”

“Yes,” Andrea said with a smile, turning her focus back to the Kandinsky on the wall.

“When you see her, will you give her my best? We haven’t spoken in decades, but, well, I’m glad she’s happy.”

Andrea quietly nodded.

“Don’t say anything to Adam, okay?”

“Of course.”

Two seconds later, Adam walked up to the pair, placing his hand on each of their shoulders. “So, I see you two have met,” he said.

“Yes, Daniel was just telling me about this remarkable Kandinsky,” Andrea said. “How was it you said you acquired it again?”

“In Toronto,” Daniel said.

“Oh, right, right. I was getting it confused with the Gauguin over there,” she said, casually pointing to the opposite wall. “You have an exquisite collection,” she said.

“Thank you, Ms. Sachs. If you’ll excuse us for just one moment,” he said, pulling his partner away. They were standing in the corner, out of earshot of most everyone, except Andrea, who had trained her ears to translate the slightest vibrations into words. “Well?” Adam hissed.

“Well what? She’s brilliant. Fast-thinking, witty, charming, and would be a perfect addition to your staff.”

“You really think so?”

Daniel nodded and walked away.

The following week, Andrea hadn’t heard any more from New York magazine. An associate editor
at the Wall Street Journal had offered her another interview, which was scheduled for two weeks out. They didn’t have an open position, but were rather proactively interviewing.

Helen returned to Boston later that week, and Andrea saw how all three Priestly women were going to miss her presence. It was something that made her consider how her own mother would get along with them. Of course, her mother was only ten years older than Miranda, but still. She could see her fitting in.

On Monday, April 28, Andrea was at the doctor’s office with Miranda for her twenty-three-week appointment. It was Rachel’s first day as second assistant, and Emily's first day on Nigel's team. The babies were 18 and 19 ounces, and her belly was measuring 31 centimeters fundal height. As Miranda was getting dressed, Andrea’s phone rang. She excused herself and quickly took the call.

“Hey Andy, it’s Adam Moss.”

“Oh, hello, Adam.”

“Do you have a minute?”

“Certainly.”

“Good. I wanted to tell you that we were all very impressed with your work and we think you have a bright future. If it wasn’t obvious, the dinner party was really the second part of your interview.”

“I assumed as much, thank you.”

“Well, I think I have even better news for you. I’d like to offer you the position of Style Editor for New York magazine.”

“Seriously?”

Adam chuckled. “Yes, seriously. I take it you’re surprised?”

“No, I mean, yes, a little. Wow, thank you.”

“Andy, we’d love to have you on our team. Please, take some time to think about it. I’ll have Carla send over the offer letter that has specifics about salary, benefits, and what not. Don’t hesitate to call me this weekend if you have any questions.”

“Wow, thank you so much. I’ll look everything over right away and get back to you early next week.”

“Perfect. Take care, Andy.”

“Bye.”

Miranda walked out of the exam room and met Andrea in the hall. “What’s wrong? Who was that?”

Andrea smiled. “I just got a job.”
“What?” Miranda said. “Wait, let’s get out of here. Tell me in the car.”

Once safely ensconced in the town car, Andrea turned to Miranda. “Style Editor at New York mag,” she said.

Miranda’s eyes widened. “You’re kidding. That’s—well, that’s pretty far from entry-level.”

“Yeah, but it’s amazing. I mean, that’s like a dream job!”

“Well, I suppose.”

“Miranda, what is it? Aren’t you happy for me?”

“Of course I am,” she said, pulling out her phone to browse through emails.

Back at Runway, after spending a few minutes with Rachel, she headed off to Nigel’s office.

“Six, what’s up?” he asked. “New girl stressing you out already?”

“No, she’s fine. I got a job offer today. Style Editor at New York magazine.”

“Oh my god, that’s great! Congratulations, Andy!”

“Thanks,” she said, smiling. “That was the reaction I expected. Miranda’s having some sort of hissy fit.”

“Well, she probably just doesn’t want you to leave her,” Nigel said.

“No, we’ve talked about this. I’m going to move into the townhouse once I leave here. A few weeks ago, she was actually looking forward to me leaving for that very reason. What do you know about a Daniel Kaiser?”

“The name sounds familiar—who is he?”

“Long-time boyfriend of New York magazine editor Adam Moss. Apparently he had an affair with Miranda back in 1980.”

“Oh yes, that’s where I’ve heard of him. He’s still with Adam? Wow.”

“Nigel, do you think Miranda would be upset if I took this job?”

“Because of him? Honey, that’s water under the bridge.”

“Since when is anything ‘water under the bridge’ with Miranda?”

“True. Does Adam know you two are together?”

“Oh gosh no. Do you think he’ll fire me when he finds out? Or worse, try to do something to Miranda?”

“No, sweetie. I’ve only met him in passing, really, but he seems like a very amicable man. If you want this job, accept his offer.”
“I do want this job, but I want Miranda more.”

“Well that’s just precious, but Miranda’s a big girl. She can take care of herself.”

“Nigel, you don’t understand. I would do anything for her. I don’t want to hurt her, but I’m afraid she won’t tell me what she wants.”

“Okay, look. Best I can do is take the girls one night this week. They can spend the night with me and you and Miranda can deal with whatever it is.”

“Tonight, please?”

“Sure. I’ll call Roy and let him know,” he said.

She wrapped her arms tightly around Nigel’s neck and kissed him on the cheek. “Thank you so much. I owe you one!”

The rest of the day, Andrea spent watching Rachel closely, filling her in on anything she may have forgotten in the past two weeks. Surprisingly, she needed very little guidance. Around three o’clock, Miranda called Andrea into her office.

“Yes, Miranda?”

“Shut the door,” she said. Andrea did. “Why is Nigel taking the girls tonight? It’s a school night.”

“Oh, I asked him to. Miranda, we really need to talk.”

“About what? Why do you think you can make these decisions regarding my children without consulting me?”

“Please, Miranda,” Andrea said, kneeling next to her chair. “I’m sorry I didn’t ask you. I love you so much, but I can see something’s not right. Please.”

Miranda closed her eyes and nodded. “Will the new girl be okay on her own?”

“Yes. Is there anything else you need to take care of? Nigel already left,” Andrea said.

“No, let’s go,” she said. “And Andrea, I love you, too. Very much. Don’t doubt that.”

Back at the townhouse, Miranda excused herself upstairs to change into something more comfortable. When Andrea heard the shower turn on, she took a few minutes to make Miranda a blueberry-banana greek yogurt smoothie. Once the shower turned off, she brought it upstairs along with an apple.

Miranda wrapped her hair in a towel and stepped out of the bathroom in her robe, which had become a little too small to fully cover her bulging belly.

“I made you a smoothie,” she said.

“Thank you,” Miranda said, eagerly reaching for the beverage.

Andrea climbed up onto the bed and sat Indian style. Miranda slipped on a pair of capri-length cotton lounge pants and a sports bra, then slipped a light, drapey cardigan over her shoulders before she crawled onto the bed and curled up against her pillow. “Okay, what was so urgent that you needed to talk to me about?”
“Well, a few things. First, I’m hurt by what you said earlier about making decisions regarding the girls. I thought you trusted me. You know I would never put them in danger or anything, right?”

“Yes, I know. I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have said that. I do trust you, immensely.”

“Okay, good,” Andrea said, leaning over and kissing her on the lips. “You were scaring me.”

“What else?”

“Why don’t you want me to take the job with Adam?”

“I never said that.”

“Miranda, this is going to be a long night if you keep that up. Please, just talk to me,” Andrea said, laying next to her and taking her hand. “Can you at least tell me whether it’s the thought of me taking another job, or just this job in general?”

“Darling, I want you to find a job, and I want it to be the perfect job. You deserve the very best, sweetheart,” Miranda said.

“So, you think this just isn’t the right job?”

“I think it wouldn’t hurt you to keep looking, that’s all,” Miranda said.

“Tell me this has nothing to do with Adam and Daniel. Tell me you just think it’s a shitty job. Tell me there are plenty of other, better offers that are going to be throwing themselves at me. Tell me that, Miranda,” she said.

Miranda closed her eyes and buried her face in the pillow.

“Tell me it’s not about Daniel, Miranda!”

“I can’t! I can’t,” Miranda cried.

Andrea took a deep breath. After a few minutes, she took the other woman in her arms. “Shh, it’s okay. Thank you for being honest,” she said quietly.

“Andrea, I do want the very best for you. And I’d be lying if I said that you’d probably get a better offer. I don’t think you will. But I’m terrified of what will happen when he finds out about me. Or,” she said, wiping her eyes, “when you decide the job means more to you than…than me.”

“Oh my god, Miranda, no, no, no. Never.”

“How can you promise me that? Everyone leaves me. I told you, I’m the common denominator,” she cried.

“Miranda, please don’t talk like that. This morning, I went to talk to Nigel—when I asked him to look after the girls. I told him that I want this job but I want you more. That I would do anything for you.”

Miranda looked up at Andrea through bleary eyes. “You shouldn’t say that, Andrea. I’m not worth it.”

“Stop talking like this. You have two beautiful daughters who love you, and two beautiful girls in here who are counting on you right now,” she said, placing her hands on her belly. “Miranda, what can I do? Just say the word and I’ll do it.”
“Darling, you need to make your own decisions. I can’t tell you what to do,” she said. “I have to go to the bathroom,” she said, gently pushing her away.

When she returned, she noticed Andrea had rearranged the pillows on the bed.

“Lay with me, just for a little bit. I’ll be your pillow,” she said.

Miranda climbed onto the bed and snuggled against Andrea. “This will never work, darling,” she whispered.

“I have an idea,” Andrea said. “What if I talk to Adam, or better yet, if we go talk to Adam first. We can get his reaction and see if the offer still stands.”

“Andrea, I am the face of his partner’s infidelity. I can’t just show up at his office,” Miranda said.

“Miranda, Daniel asked about you when I was at their home. He asked about your pregnancy, and said he was glad you were happy.”

Miranda sighed and leaned back. “The one thing I remember about him was that he always wanted children.” She gently folded her hands on top of her belly. “If we go to Adam, we risk him going to Irv.”

“So, we talk to Irv first,” Andrea said. “If I accept this job, I’ll be leaving Runway anyway.”

“Oh, Andrea. It’s not that simple.”

“What is the worst that can happen if you tell Irv? He needs to know at some point. I’m sure he would prefer hearing it from you than the tabloids.”

“Yes, but he could really make my life hell at work,” Miranda said.

“Well, since you’ll be on maternity leave, he would be making Nigel’s life hell,” she said with a wink.

“Andrea, sweetheart, I love your naive enthusiasm, but there is more to consider.”

“Mmm, like what?” she asked, softly stroking the woman’s belly.

“Oh god, Andrea,” she moaned. “I can’t think straight when you do that.”

Andrea’s hands caressed Miranda’s breasts through the cotton bra. “Can I take this off?” she asked.

Miranda nodded and arched her back so Andrea could undo the clasp, gasping as her breasts bounced freely. “Not too rough,” she warned.

Andrea gently cupped each breast and laved it with her tongue. She was careful not to pinch or suck directly on her nipples, and judging by her moans, Miranda was enjoying this foreplay very much.

“Wait, wait,” Miranda said as she sat up. “I can’t lay on my back like this.” She pushed herself onto her hands and knees.

Andrea piled a few pillows underneath Miranda’s chest and trailed her hands down the woman’s back, slipping her hands beneath the waistband of her pants.

“Off, take them off,” Miranda panted.
Andrea did, and trailed her hands slowly up and down Miranda’s thighs as she positioned herself behind the woman. “Are you ready for me?” she whispered, softly grazing her fingers along the woman’s swollen, wet slit.

“Yes, please, Andrea,” she moaned.

The younger woman slowly began tracing her fingers along her folds, circling but not penetrating, careful to avoid her clit. “Oh god, Miranda, you’re so wet. Talk to me.”

“Inside—I need you inside, oh god!” she cried out.

Andrea plunged two fingers inside the hot, wet center and slowly began curling her fingers.

“Oh god—hurry—I’m almost there. Please!” Miranda cried.

Andrea used her other hand to rub her clit vigorously, but to her surprise, it wasn’t taking Miranda over the edge. She spun around so she was laying on her back and began sucking on Miranda’s clit, gently using her teeth in the way she knew Miranda loved.

“I need more, Andrea. Deeper, go deeper!” she panted.

Andrea tried adding a third finger, and Miranda was anxiously thrusting her hips backward to no avail. Andrea reached up and cupped Miranda’s breast, gently pinching her nipple, but Miranda swatted her hand away.

“Not that. Go in the top dresser drawer. There’s a box in the back,” she said. Andrea quickly retrieved the box, surprised to see two dildos, a harness, an egg vibrator, and a small tube of lubricant. “The purple one,” Miranda panted. “Oh god, please.”

Andrea squirted a drop of lube on her hand and rubbed it over the dildo before slowly inserting it, penetrating Miranda’s core. She heard Miranda’s gasp, and after giving her time to adjust, Andrea began pumping the dildo in and out until Miranda cried out her orgasm and slumped against the pillows. She slowly crawled up Miranda’s body and took her face, kissing her.

Miranda pulled Andrea closer and deepened the kiss, her tongue expertly exploring the young woman’s mouth. When they parted for air, the young woman began trailing kisses down her neck. “I’m sorry, sweetheart.”

“Why are you apologizing?”

“Needing that thing,” she said.

“Don’t worry about it. I saw that harness you have, maybe we can play with that sometime soon, no?”

“Mm, yes,” Miranda purred. “I was thinking, why don’t you let me talk to Irv tomorrow?”

“Wait—you were thinking of this while we were having sex?!”

“No, before.”

“And you still let me try and seduce you?”

“Of course. I wasn’t going to pass up that opportunity,” she said with a smirk. “But in all seriousness, I’ll talk to Irv. I’ve told you how easily distracted he is with my pregnancy. I’m fairly certain I can convince him of just about anything.”
“Whatever you think,” she whispered, draping her arm across Miranda’s body. “My god, you’re so sexy.”

“Oh be serious,” Miranda said with a laugh. “I’m a heifer.”

“No, god no, Miranda,” Andrea said. “How can you even think that? You’re the most beautiful woman in the world.”

Tears began to pool in Miranda’s clear blue eyes. “You can’t mean that,” she said, rolling her eyes.

“I do, Miranda,” she said, softly cupping her cheek.

Miranda closed her eyes and gently shook her head as the tears streamed down her cheeks.

“Don’t cry,” Andrea whispered as she kissed the tears at Miranda’s temple. “How about we take a bath, and then I’ll rub some cream on your gorgeous body?”

The next morning, they dressed and headed into the office together. In the car, Miranda suddenly put her phone down and turned to Andrea. “What were the details of your offer? You never said.”

“I never looked,” Andrea said.

“What? Why?”

“I don’t want to know what I’m turning down.”

“Andrea, you are not turning this down!”

“Let’s just see how today goes. If you still talk to Irv and smooth things over, then I’ll open the email.”

“Darling, just for that I’m going straight up to Irv’s office,” she said.

Sure enough, once they arrived at Elias Clarke, Andrea pressed the button for the 18th floor, and Miranda pressed 32.

“Oh, hello, Miranda. What a surprise,” Irv’s assistant greeted her.

“I need to see Irv right away.”

“I’m afraid he has a conference call in a few minutes. Can I schedule something for later this morning?”

“I’ll only be a minute,” Miranda said, walking into Irv’s office and shutting the door.

“Well, Miranda, what a surprise,” he said.

“Yes, que supresa,” she said, rolling her eyes as she thought of Jacqueline. “There’s something I need to speak to you about urgently,” she said as she shrugged her jacket off her shoulders.

“Of course, please, come sit,” he said, taking her jacket and leading her to the sofa. “Can I get you a glass of water or perhaps some tea?”

“No, I won’t be long,” she said.

“I must say, you are looking absolutely radiant. I trust the pregnancy is going well?”
Miranda took a deep breath. “Well, that’s part of why I’m here. Yes, everything is going well, though my doctors are scaring me nearly to death with all this talk of ‘over fifty’ and ‘high-risk multiples’—I’m really quite scared. If something were to happen to me, there would be no one to look after my children.”

“Miranda, you mustn’t think that way,” Irv said, sitting down on the sofa next to her. His hand awkwardly hovered in the air for a few seconds before he tucked it back on his lap. “If you need more time off, take it. Runway will be here when you get back, and of course, your health is more important than anything right now.”

“Thank you, I really appreciate your concern, Irv. I—I’m sorry, I’m a little embarrassed to be saying this, but I’ve started seeing someone. A partner. Someone who can take care of me at home, and who loves my children nearly as much as I do,” she said, dabbing at the corner of her eye.

“Well, I’m happy for you. Do I know him?”

Miranda took a deep breath. “Her. And yes, you do.”

Irv’s eyes widened. “Oh my. I suppose I did hear that Jacqueline was back in New York.”

“What? No! I’m talking about Andrea Sachs.”

“Your assistant?”

“Yes. Soon-to-be former assistant.”

“Well, I see why you wanted to come to me. How long has this been going on?”

“On the record, our relationship began the day she handed in her resignation. Off the record, well, that’s off the record,” she said. “I need to know if this will be a problem,” she said, arching her back and smoothing her hands over her belly. She could feel Irv’s eyes glued to her swelling bosom, and unfortunately the disgust only sent a shiver through her, making her nipples hard against her cotton bra. “Irving? Will this be a problem?” she repeated.

“Oh, um, sorry,” he stammered.

Then, as if on cue, one of the babies kicked her hard, causing a gasp. She pressed her hand to the side of her belly and smiled. “The one on the left is a little spunky,” she said with a shrug. “You can feel if you’d like. She’s kicking now,” Miranda said as she turned to face him.

He reached out an unsteady hand and gently pressed his palm against her blouse. “My god, that’s amazing,” he said.

“So, regarding Andrea, she will only be staying on for two or three more weeks, as she is about to accept another offer.”

Irv slowly pulled his hand away. “That’s fine. I trust that you would not jeopardize the magazine in any way. Just, you know, don’t make a scene of it.”

“We won’t,” Miranda said. “The last thing I want to deal with right now is a gaggle of paparazzi following us around.”

“Thank you, Miranda, for coming to me. My offer still stands. If there is anything that my wife or I can do—now or after the babies are born—please don’t hesitate to ask.”
“Thank you,” she said. “I should get back to my office, though. I realize I’ve kept you from a meeting.”

Irv extended his hand and helped Miranda from the couch. She picked up her jacket and headed for the elevator, which Irv’s assistant was holding for her. As she strode out of the elevator towards her office, she made eye contact with Andrea and gave a little nod, indicating that she should follow her.

“How did it go?” Andrea asked after she closed the office door.

“Just a minute,” Miranda said as she rushed into the bathroom to relieve her bladder. She left the door cracked open. “He’s fine with it,” Miranda said. She flushed the toilet, then washed her hands. “He almost made me vomit, but whatever. We don’t have to worry about him.”

“Are you not feeling well? What did he do?”

“Aside from undress me with his eyes, I let him feel the baby kicking,” she said, leaning against the doorframe. She reached down and took Andrea’s hands and placed them on her belly. “I want to remember your hands, not his,” she said.

Andrea leaned forward and chastely kissed her on the lips, careful not to smudge her lipstick. “Later,” she said, “I have to get back to work.”

“Come by tonight?”

Andrea nodded, then quickly walked out of the office.

That evening, when Andrea arrived at the townhouse, the Priestlys were all sitting in the living room. Miranda was on the couch with her feet propped up on the coffee table, Caroline was working on her Algebra homework on the other end of the coffee table, and Cassidy was lying on her stomach, taking notes from her History textbook.

“I come bearing gifts,” Andrea said as she set her bag down next to the couch.

“Andy!” Cassidy squealed as she jumped up to hug her.

“First, I hope you had a nice time with Uncle Nigel last night. And second, because you are seriously the two prettiest, kindest, smartest fourth graders ever…I brought you cupcakes,” she said, pulling a pastry box out of her bag.

“Andy, did Mom tell you about our awards on Thursday?” Caroline asked.

“No, sweetie. What awards?” Andrea said.

“I didn’t tell her because I haven’t spoken to her since you told me, girls,” Miranda said in her defense.

“Academic All-Stars,” Caroline said, grinning. “I have the highest grade in Science, so I just know I’m going to get an award!”

Cassidy rolled her eyes. “I have the highest grade a lot of the time, but they give it to other kids because they ‘put more effort’ into their work. It’s silly.”

“Oh, just because it comes so naturally to you, huh? Well, I think my project on the solar system is insurmountable,” Caroline said.
“Not the right usage, Caro,” Cassidy said.

“Hey, girls. Cut it out,” Andrea said. “Or your mom and I will eat your cupcakes.”

Miranda’s eyes widened.

“Don’t worry,” Andrea said, winking at her, “I bought six. You’ll get one regardless.”

Miranda bit her lip and softly shook her head. “Andrea, would you like to come with me to their Awards Assembly at school with me Thursday? It’s at 1:30 PM.”

“Yeah, please come, Andy!” Cassidy said. 

“Sure. I’d love to,” she replied. “Why don’t you two get us plates and napkins and forks, and we’ll divide up these cupcakes.” When the girls were in the kitchen, Andrea took a seat on the couch next to Miranda, setting the pastry box on the table. “What do you have a taste for? Let’s see if I could read your mind.”

“Hmm, let’s see. Choco—no, wait, lemon. Whipped lemon with a buttercream or meringue frosting.”

Andrea opened the box and pulled a cupcake out, setting it on the plate Cassidy held out. “One lemon meringue pie cupcake for your highness,” she said, handing over the plate dramatically.

“Whoa, how did you know that’s what Mom wanted?”

“Honestly, I have no idea. I bought six different cupcakes and hoped one was close.”

Cassidy selected the red velvet for herself, and Caroline chose the double-chocolate cupcake. Andrea’s options were now narrowed down to oreo cookie, birthday cake, or white chocolate raspberry.

“Here,” Miranda said, holding out a forkful of the lemon cupcake. “Try this.”

Andrea let Miranda feed her a bite of the rich lemon cake.

“Thank you for spoiling me, darling,” Miranda said. “Girls, when you’re finished can you take these into the kitchen? And make sure to save that Oreo one for me tomorrow.”

Andrea cuddled against Miranda’s side and took her hand as the girls returned to their homework. “I love this,” she whispered.

“Me too,” Miranda said. “You realize that it will only be quiet like this for a few months longer, right?”

Andrea smiled and squeezed her hand. “It will be quiet when we’re watching them sleep,” she said. Miranda chuckled. “When they’re sleeping, we’re sleeping or running errands. I’m warning you, if this is what you think it will be like, you’re wrong.”

“It’s not the quiet I like. It’s having all the people I love here in the same room. I’ll be the sleep-deprived parent, that’s okay. You can sleep while I watch them,” Andrea said.

Miranda softly chewed on her lower lip as she tried to hold back tears. “Parent,” she said. “I like that.”
They sat in silence for a while, watching the girls and just enjoying each other’s presence. “So, can we talk about my job again?”

“Certainly.”

“I really can’t believe everything went okay with Irv earlier,” Andrea said.

“I know. He really has a soft spot for pregnant women. You know, he and his wife tried to have a child for years. She had several miscarriages, and one of them was in the third trimester.”

“But he has two sons, right?”

“Yes. They eventually gave up and adopted two boys—brothers—who were living in foster care.”

“Wow, I had no idea.”

“His wife Myra is quite a remarkable woman. I don’t know how she’s stayed with him so long.”

“Anyway, so he knows you and I are more-than-friends, and he’s not going to fire you?”

“Correct. I told him I was scared, and that I couldn’t do it on my own—without you,” she said. “That is the absolute truth.”

“Aren’t you still worried something will happen to the babies?”

“Anything can happen. I can get in a car accident or slip and fall down my stairs. Nothing’s certain until I can hold my babies in my arms.”

“Nightmares?” Andrea asked.

“Vivid.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“They only happen when you’re not here. And then I forget when I see you,” she said with a shrug. “So, back to your job. Have you read the offer letter yet?”

“Yes. It’s a five-year contract, $70,000 salary, based in New York with minimal travel. I mean, there has to be a catch, right?”

“Wow, that is a very generous offer. My first salaried position as Assistant Editor was $13,500.”

“Yikes.”

Miranda smiled. “Andrea, I spent the afternoon re-reading my contract and our Code of Business Ethics at Runway. Are you familiar with the term ‘conflict of interest?’”

“Sure, like when a politician is in the position to make decisions that can benefit him personally, and it kind of blurs the lines of whether he’s able to do his government duty.”

“Exactly. But in the business world, we also have this. It’s what keeps a healthy level of competition between similar publications.” She took a deep breath. “I really hate to say this, but if you and I are in a personal relationship, and you have a position in publishing where you’re responsible for that publication’s fashion or style coverage, the Board of Directors has the power to terminate me, whether or not I disclose this conflict.”
Andrea closed her eyes and squeezed Miranda’s hand. “Is it limited to fashion and style?”

“It’s actually listed as ‘style, including fashion, apparel, accessories, and beauty,’ she said. “But that wasn’t what you wanted to write about anyway, was it?”

“No, you’re right. So what do I tell Adam?”

“I think you should be honest with him. He might think better of you if you are upfront. You might even ask him if a different section is available like entertainment or politics.”

“Yeah, I guess. It just sucks.”

“It does, and I’m so sorry. It really didn’t occur to me that they would be considering you for style coverage. No offense—it’s just not your background. Though, I’m sure you would be wonderful at it.”

“I’ll call Adam tomorrow. Maybe this interview at The Journal will pan out.”

“I’m confident you’ll find something,” Miranda said. “Girls, do you have much more homework to do?”

“No, I’m done,” Cassidy said.

“Me too,” Caroline said.

“Okay, why don’t you head upstairs and get ready for bed?” Miranda said as she stood from the couch.

“Is Andy staying tonight?”

Miranda turned and looked at the young woman, who nodded. “Yes, she is. I’ll be upstairs to tuck you in shortly.”

The girls headed upstairs, and Andrea tugged Miranda backwards, onto her lap.

“Oh, Andrea, I will crush you,” she said as she struggled to get up.

“No you won’t,” the young woman insisted. “You’re as light as a feather, and I just miss holding you.”

Miranda smiled and settled into her chest. “You say ‘miss’ as if…” She let her voice trail off and they sat in silence for a few minutes. “I should go tuck them in,” Miranda finally said as she went to turn the light off. “Are you coming?”

“Yeah, I’m going to take a quick shower first,” she said. She caught up to Miranda on the stairs. “Look, I didn’t mean to unsettle you. I know we’ve only really been together for a few months, but…I don’t know. It just feels like a lifetime.”

Miranda nodded. “And then some,” she said. “I’ll meet you in the bedroom in a few minutes.”

While Andrea was showering, Miranda made her way to her daughters’ bedrooms. As was becoming ritual in the Priestly home, Miranda climbed up on Cassidy’s bed with one daughter on each side as they took turns talking to the babies and feeling their kicks.

“Mom, what did you mean about the conflict of interest?” Cassidy asked quietly.
“Yeah, are you going to get fired because of Andy?” Caroline asked.

Miranda frowned. “I thought you two were doing homework.”

“We have ears, you know.”

She rolled her eyes. “No, mommy is not going to lose her job.”

“So what is a conflict of interest?” Cassidy repeated.

“I can lose my job if I have a conflict of interest. Like, if Anna—you know, from Vogue—was my girlfriend instead of Andrea.”

“Eeeew.”

“She looks so old and bony.”

Miranda’s lip curled up in a smile. “But I could get fired because she and I would be able to tell each other secrets that we could use at work. Does that make sense? I’m sorry, I’m not explaining this very well,” she said, hugging them both.

“No, I think I get it. Is Andy going to find another job?”

“She’s looking, sweetie. I’m trying to help her, but she needs to do this on her own, too.”

“I like having her here, Mom,” Caroline said. “It’s not like Stephen. It seems like Andy actually likes us.”

“Yes, like she’s not just buying us stuff and hugging us because she wants you to think she does.”

Miranda smiled. “I have no doubt she adores you, completely independent of her feelings for me. And I’m really looking forward to her staying here permanently.”

“So, can we like call her and talk to her more and stuff? Since she’s going to be moving in?” Cassidy asked.

“Well you will have to ask her for her phone number, but I’m sure she won’t mind,” Miranda said, kissing her on the forehead. “Okay you two, off to bed. I think you lulled the babies to sleep, so maybe I can get some rest, too.” She bent over and kissed Caroline on the forehead, too.

“G’nite, Mom. Love you.”

“G’nite, love you. And tell Andy I love her, too.”

“Me too!”

“I will, darlings. Sweet dreams,” Miranda said as she turned out the light and shut their door.

As she made her way to her bedroom, she felt a dull pain in her belly that almost made it feel like she had to pee. She used the guest bathroom, but when she climbed into bed, the tightness was still there. Leaning against the headboard, she pulled out her iPad and began looking through the book.

Some time later, Andrea stepped out of the bathroom. Her hair was dry and she was wearing one of Miranda’s silk sleep shirts. “I wish I had a camera right now,” she said as she approached the bed. “You look ridiculous and adorable with this iPad resting on your belly.”
“Andrea, what does ‘DH’ stand for?” Miranda asked, peering at the screen through her eyeglasses.

“Oh, I don’t know. Designated hitter?”

“What?”

“You know, in baseball. A guy who’s not playing in the field but just goes up to bat, usually for the pitcher.”

“No, that’s not it.”

“What are you reading?”

“This article about pregnancy,” she said, handing Andrea the iPad.

Andrea skimmed through the page and started giggling. “Miranda, I never thought you’d be browsing these mommy message boards. ‘I think it means dear husband,’” she said, handing the iPad back. “What were you looking up anyway?”

“Nothing.”

“Come on, it’s not nothing,” Andrea said.

“I just felt this weird sort of pain. It’s different than what I was feeling before. But it’s fine. It’s better now that I’m laying down.”

Andrea curled up against her and carefully took her glasses off, setting them on the nightstand. She turned out the light and pulled the covers up and around Miranda.

Miranda settled against Andrea’s body. “I meant to tell you, the girls wanted me to tell you they loved you.”

“When did they say that?”

“When I was tucking them in. Sometimes they act so grown-up, I forget they’re still children—my beautiful, precious children,” she said, softly stroking her belly as tears pooled in her eyes. “Andrea, I’m so glad you’re here.”

She smiled and pressed a kiss to the top of Miranda’s head. “Me, too,” she said.

First thing Wednesday morning, Andrea put a call into Carla at *NY Mag* and asked her to put a meeting on Adam’s calendar for her today. This was something she wanted to discuss with him in person, and since his only available time was at 8:30 AM, Andrea headed straight to their offices.

“Andy, what a surprise. What can I do for you?” Adam asked as he shut his office door.

“First,” she said, “I want to thank you for your offer. It’s an incredible position and I can’t tell you how excited I am that you and your team have such confidence in me.”

“I’m sensing a ‘but’ here,” Adam said.

“Well, yes. I want to be honest with you. I’m involved in a personal relationship that—although I have yet to see your Code of Business Ethics—I’m sure would be in violation.”

Adam’s eyes widened. “What, are you seeing Rupert Murdoch’s son?”
“Not exactly. Miranda Priestly.”

“What about her? She’s your—ohh. Oh my god, you’re dating. You and Miranda.”

Andrea shrugged. “Love is never convenient.”

“And look at that, you’re actually in love,” he said, shaking his head. “You know, I should have known. I’ve known many former Runway employees, and in all my years you’re the only one who ever defended her actions.”

“There’s a lot more to her than meets the eye. Editor-in-chief is only a mask. But, I didn’t come here to talk about her. I was simply going to ask if there was any possibility that you had an opening for a different section—really, anything but Style.”

Adam took a deep breath and sat back in his chair. “The only other positions I have are contract writer/reporter. They’re hourly, and honestly, I think you can do better than that.”

“Well, I’m sorry, but I will have to decline your rather generous offer,” she said, standing up and shaking his hand. “And, of course, we would appreciate it if you didn’t say anything about our relationship.”

“Of course,” he said. “I’m sorry we couldn’t make it work.”

“Me too. Thanks again!” she said, heading out the door. Once in the cab, she texted Miranda. 

_Turned down the offer. Told Adam about us. On my way to the office._

She didn’t receive a response from Miranda, and hoped she wasn’t upset. When she came into the office, Rachel quickly pulled her aside and asked for help on some disaster in Accessories, but when it finally calmed down, Miranda called her into her office.

“I got a call from Adam Moss this morning,” she said.

“What did he want?” Andrea asked.

“To know if I preferred women back in the 80s.”

“What did you say to him?”

“I told him it was the second time in nearly three decades that he and I have spoken, and both times he was asking questions about my personal life. I also told him that I don’t like labels, so I’ve never considered myself ‘gay’. I also reassured him that I never had any romantic interest in David--or was it Daniel?--whatever, and that seemed to put his fears to rest.”

“Oh my god, I’m so sorry, Miranda. If it wasn’t for me, he would never have called and harassed you like that.”

Miranda shrugged. “Let’s just forget about Adam, okay? I don’t want to think about him for at least another twenty years, preferably more.”

Andrea smiled. “I’m going to go home to my apartment after work tonight if that’s okay. I know we’re going to the girls’ Awards Assembly tomorrow, and I really want to narrow down these applicants and hire someone by Friday.”

Miranda frowned. “I have to sleep by myself?”

“I’m sure the girls would be happy to sleep with you if you want. I can talk to them.”
“No, it’s alright. They need their sleep. I would only keep them awake with my tossing and turning and going to the bathroom,” she said. “I’m sure. I’ll be fine.”

Andrea nodded and headed back to her desk to check on the Accessories crisis.

Later that evening, Andrea was sitting on her couch with a mug of hot tea, trying to decide between the last three applicants. It was nearly one o’clock in the morning, but she knew if she didn’t finish this tonight, she wouldn’t have time the following day. Just as she narrowed it down to the top two, her phone buzzed with an incoming text: Are you awake?

Andrea smiled and tossed the folders onto the coffee table as she picked up her phone and called Miranda. “Yes, I’m awake,” she said.

“You didn’t have to call me,” Miranda said.

“I wanted to hear your voice. Why are you awake?”

“Couldn’t sleep. The babies were perfectly still all afternoon, and it’s like they waited until I climbed into bed to start kicking and doing somersaults.”

“Aw, I’m sorry. What about a bath? Would that help?”

“I don’t feel like getting up again.”

“Are you having more pain?”

“No, not really.”

“Would you tell me if something was wrong?”

“Yes, yes, I promise.”

“What can I do for you?”

“I don’t know. I wish you were here to hold me.”

“Do you want me to come over?”

“No, that’s absurd. It’s the middle of the night.”

“It’s only a ten minute cab ride.”

“No. No. I will be okay,” she said quietly. “Can you just talk to me for a while?”

“About what?”

“Anything. I just want to hear your voice.”

“Oh, so my voice is going to put you to sleep?” she teased.

“Yes, is there something wrong with that?”

Andrea chuckled. “Not at all. Get comfortable and then put me on speaker.”
There was a muffled sound on the other end of the line. Andrea took the opportunity to jump up and grab the closest book from her bookshelf, which happened to be a collection of Kate Chopin’s short stories. “Okay, you’re on speaker,” Miranda said.

“So I spent the evening looking through the resumes of potential new assistants who I was able to interview over the phone. I’ve narrowed it down—“

“Don’t talk about work,” Miranda said, interrupting her.

Andrea smiled and flipped open to the first story in the book. “I figured you’d say that. How about I read you a bedtime story?”

“Perfect,” Miranda said.

Andrea began to read, and after she finished the first story, she quietly asked, “Still awake?”

“Mm-hmm,” was the reply.

She kept reading until there was no longer a response. She looked at the clock and saw that it was nearly three o’clock in the morning, so she turned out her lights and went to bed.

The next day at the office, Miranda stopped by Andrea’s desk as she handed her coat and bag to the new girl. “I need you to send me a new copy of your resignation letter, Andrea. I know you set it on my desk last Friday, the 25th, but I need to email HR an electronic copy,” she said.

Andrea nodded. “I think it’s on my home computer, but I can quickly re-write it. Dalton at 1:30?”

“Actually, we won’t need to leave until 2:45,” Miranda said. “I spoke with the Vice-Principal this morning, and the awards portion doesn’t begin until 3:30. Make reservations for dinner afterwards—I think the girls would enjoy Cantina Familiar. Four of us.”

Andrea nodded. A few minutes later, she emailed her resignation letter, then sent Miranda a quick text: Am I invited to dinner or will James be joining you?

“Andrea,” Miranda called.

She quickly jumped up and walked into the office, shutting the door.

“Darling, you’re the fourth. Me, you, and the girls.”

“Oh, okay,” she said. “Sorry, I shouldn’t have had to ask.”

“No, I’m glad you feel like you can ask me those questions,” Miranda said. “What time did you end up going to bed last night?”

“Close to three.”

Miranda shook her head. “You must be exhausted. I would apologize, but I slept so soundly last night after you called,” she said. “Can you stay tonight?”

“You bet,” Andrea said, walking around to the other side of the desk. She leaned over and gently kissed Miranda on the lips. “That was your goodnight kiss from last night,” she said. She kissed her again, “and this is your good morning.”

Miranda smiled and Andrea could see her cheeks turning pink. She glanced at her computer screen for a second. “I wish you could quit today and move in right now.”
“I’ll start bringing more of my stuff over. Think you can share a tiny bit of your closet?”

“For you,” Miranda said, “anything.”

Both Caroline and Cassidy received awards this year, and Miranda couldn’t have been more proud. It was the first school function she’d been to since she started showing, so of course the other parents were doting on her, telling her how wonderful she looked, offering their seats, etc. Although they were often too catty for her liking, she had to admit that the mothers at school were extraordinarily generous, and on this occasion, kind. No one asked about Andrea’s presence, and she suspected that most presumed she was the girls’ nanny, especially after the way they ran to hug the young woman afterwards. But for now, that was okay. The fewer questions, the better.

They enjoyed a fun dinner at Cantina, and that night, Miranda and Andrea made love over and over until the sun began to rise. Andrea had to be in the office at 9:00 AM to meet with Abby, who would hopefully be Miranda’s newest assistant. Miranda, on the other hand, had no meetings scheduled, so she decided to work from home. The truth is, her bed smelled like sex and she wanted to stay there for as long as possible.

Andrea was delighted that Abby accepted the position. Like herself, Abby was an English major, looking to get her foot in the door in publishing. Both Abby and Rachel were highly competent, and she had no doubt that they would be able to keep the office running smoothly. She did wonder where Emily was looking that she had such a difficult time finding a decent employee, but then she remembered that first and foremost in Emily’s mind was having a sense of fashion.

Friday afternoon was fairly slow, so Andrea finished typing up the task lists for Abby and Rachel. They would no longer be “first” and “second.” For the time being, they would each be responsible for different things. For example, Rachel was the liaison with Accessories, and Abby would be the liaison for Editorial. Abby would coordinate and take notes at all the run-throughs, and Rachel would be responsible for coordinating meetings and conference calls with new designers.

Eventually, one of them would take on more responsibility with Miranda’s personal life—dry cleaning, reservations, the girls’ school functions—but she knew Miranda would select one of them when she was ready. For now, she still had Andrea.

Andrea hadn’t received any other job offers this week, so she spent the last few hours of her day preparing for her interview on Friday, May 9. Promptly at 6:00 PM, she closed her computer and headed home to the townhouse.

James was out of town on business, so the girls stayed home, and the four of them spent a very relaxing, fun weekend watching movies, television shows, and even some quiet reading. A few times, Andrea caught Miranda wincing as she held her belly, but every time, she reassured Andrea it was just ligament pain because her belly was growing so quickly. By Monday night, Andrea was not happy with that answer, so Miranda promised to bring it up with Dr. Assaf at her twenty-five week check-in on May 12.

The next morning, Andrea was going over the show requests that needed to be sent out for some of the upcoming Fall/Winter shows while Miranda, Nigel, and Irv were meeting to discuss who would handle what while Miranda would be out. She wasn’t due for another three months, but Nigel wanted to have this meeting earlier rather than later so he, Emily, and Serena could prepare as much as possible.

After their meeting, they were casually chatting in the hall outside the conference room. Nigel was commenting on how calm the new assistants have been, and Irv even made a comment about the
redhead being “too uptight,” which caused everyone to burst into laughter.

Out of nowhere, Miranda reached out and gripped Irv’s forearm. Nigel and Irv quickly exchanged glances, and they realized she was holding her breath and wincing. “Miranda, what’s going on?” Nigel asked, taking her other arm. She shook her head and bit her lower lip, and Irv began to panic.

“Irv, why don’t you head back upstairs?” Nigel said, giving him a dirty look. He knew the last thing Miranda would want would be Irv Ravitz fussing over her. “I’ll just walk Miranda back to her office,” he said.

As Irv was walking away, Miranda took a deep breath and opened her eyes. Without saying a word, Nigel led her down the hallway and back towards her office. Andrea saw them coming down the hall and Nigel quickly gestured to her to follow them in the office.

“Hey Abby, why don’t you shadow Rachel for a while?” Andrea said. “Rachel, I think it would be really great if you could tell her anything you maybe wish you knew your first week,” she said, quickly following Miranda and Nigel into her office and shutting the door.

“Miranda, what’s wrong?” Andrea said, walking up to her and taking her hand.

“Nothing. I’m fine. Really, now stop fussing and go back to whatever it was you two were doing,” she said.

Andrea led her to the couch. “Lay down and rest for a while.”

“I will do nothing of the sort. I’m fine, Andrea.”

Andrea ignored her and picked up her legs, spinning her so she was laying on the couch. She took Miranda’s shoes off and sat on the edge of the couch, resting her arm across Miranda’s legs, effectively pinning her down.

“Honestly, let me up, I’m fine,” she said.

“Nigel, can you pour her a glass of water? I’d do it myself but she’ll escape if I move my arm.”

He chuckled and quietly poured a glass of still water from the pitcher on the console. Miranda rolled her eyes as she accepted the water and drank.

“What happened?” Andrea asked.

“Nothing. I just had more round ligament pain. It caught me off-guard. That’s all.”

“Nigel, what happened?” Andrea said.

“I don’t know. She grabbed Irv’s arm out of the blue and she was holding her breath for a while.”

“Okay, so the pain was a little stronger than it’s been in the past few weeks,” she said. “I’m fine. I have some emails to send, let me up, Andrea.”

Andrea bent over and kissed Miranda softly. “You promised you would tell me if anything was wrong, remember?” she whispered. Nigel awkwardly turned and looked out the window, trying to give the women some privacy.

“Yes, I remember. I promise, darling,” she said, cupping Andrea’s cheek. “Let me up.”

Andrea nodded and stood from the couch. Miranda swung her feet around and sat up. Without
bothering to put her shoes on, she got up and walked over to her desk. Andrea was whispering something to Nigel when they heard Miranda gasp.

She was bent over her desk with one hand on the surface and the other cradling her belly. Andrea ran over and wrapped her arm around her shoulders. “Breathe, Miranda. Exhale. In and out,” she whispered.

“Should I call someone?” Nigel asked nervously.

“No. Nigel, go back to your office. I’ll stay here with Miranda for a while, she’ll be fine,” Andrea said, hoping Miranda would be able to relax if Nigel left.

Miranda released her breath and quickly inhaled again. Andrea softly brushed her arm. “Are you okay?” she asked.

Miranda took a few deep breaths and shook her head. “I think so. I have to go to the bathroom,” she said, squeezing Andrea’s arm gently as she headed to the private en suite in her office.

Andrea sighed and leaned against the desk. From everything she read online, it was a little too early for her to be feeling Braxton Hicks contractions. Before she could let her mind wander any further, Miranda called out to her from the bathroom. She ran over and gently turned the knob, cracking the door open. “Miranda?”

“I’m bleeding,” she said, wiping the tears from her eyes. “I need clean underwear, please.”

Andrea nodded and quickly ran to her desk, fishing a pair of underwear and a slim pad from her purse. Andrea returned to the bathroom and knelt down next to Miranda. She put the pad in the silk underwear and carefully slipped Miranda’s pants off from where they were pooled at her ankles. Andrea helped Miranda step into the underwear, then back into her pants. She gently cupped Miranda’s cheek and kissed her softly. “Don’t cry, it’s going to be okay. Let’s go have Dr. Assaf check and make sure the babies are okay,” she said.

Miranda nodded. “Can you call her now?”

“I’ll call while we’re heading down to the car,” she said. “I already texted Roy.”

Miranda slipped into her shoes and grabbed her sunglasses, immediately putting them on. She marched out of the office and paused while Rachel gathered her coat and bag. Andrea quickly followed, grabbing her bag and giving Rachel and Abby strict instructions to postpone all of Miranda’s meetings for the remainder of the day. If there was an emergency, she told them to ask Emily what to do. When she heard the elevator ding, she practically sprinted down the hall to join Miranda, who was apparently already on the phone with Dr. Assaf’s office.

“Yes…well, I don’t know. No. Twenty-four weeks. No. Okay, we’re on our way. Thank you,” she said, ending the call.

“I’m sorry, I had to make sure Abby and Rachel were—“ Andrea began to explain.

Miranda held up her hand. “It’s fine. Dr. Assaf wants to meet us in the emergency room,” she said. She reached down and squeezed Andrea’s hand. “I think I’m having contractions,” she said quietly. Andrea could tell by the shakiness in her voice that she was on the verge of tears.

“Yes…well, I don’t know. No. Twenty-four weeks. No. Okay, we’re on our way. Thank you,” she said, ending the call.

“I’m sorry, I had to make sure Abby and Rachel were—“ Andrea began to explain.
“How can I stay calm?” she said through her teeth. “It’s too early, Andrea. It’s too early.”

The elevator doors opened and Andrea led Miranda through the lobby and to the car, not caring who was staring at them. “Emergency room,” she told Roy. She helped Miranda into the backseat and climbed in right after her.

“It’s too early,” Miranda cried, running her hands up and down over her belly.

Andrea silently prayed it was only a false alarm. She didn’t want to consider the alternative.

In the emergency room, Dr. Assaf was already waiting for Miranda in an exam room. Her nurse hooked up the fetal monitor as she quickly removed Miranda’s pants and underwear to do a fetal exam. “We have two strong heartbeats,” the nurse announced, “not seeing signs of distress.”

“Well, Miranda,” Dr. Assaf said, “we have more good news. First, the babies are doing fine and don’t seem to be in distress. Second, you’re hardly dilated at all. You’re starting to efface a little, but at this stage in a twin pregnancy, that’s exactly what we would expect, though I suspect it’s why you noticed some light spotting. I’d still like to give you some corticosteroids as a precaution to help give the babies’ lungs a little boost. It’s totally up to you, but I’d like to give you a shot of terbutaline to try and stop the uterine contractions.”

Miranda wasn’t responding, so Andrea took her hand. “Can you explain the pros and cons of the terbutaline injection?”

“Terbutaline is a beta agonist. Its primary use is for patients with difficulty breathing, as it relaxes the smooth muscles of the lungs and airways. The uterus is also a smooth muscle, so terbutaline will stop—or at least relax—contractions. Side effects can be anything from headache and dizziness to difficulty breathing and palpitations,” she explained. “I’m going to give you the steroids now,” she said, taking the medication from the nurse and injecting it into the IV in Miranda’s arm.

“Miranda,” Andrea said, gently squeezing her hand. “Do you want that medication?”

“What would happen if I don’t take it?” she asked.

“Your contractions could cause your water to break, and at that point there would be very little we could do to stop labor. Terbutaline will slow down your labor. You may still have contractions, but unless your cervix is dilating or the babies are in distress, we won’t really be concerned.”

“And is this okay for the babies?” Miranda asked.

“Yes. It could elevate their heart rate, but there won’t be any lasting effects.”

“Okay, do it,” Miranda said.

While the doctor was administering the medication, Andrea sat on the edge of the bed and gently brushed her thumb across Miranda’s cheek. “See, everything’s fine. The babies are going to be okay,” she said.

“Oh god, I was so scared,” she said, taking Andrea’s hand and tugging her closer.

“Miranda,” Dr. Assaf said, “I want you on bedrest for the rest of the week just as a precaution. I’ll see you Monday morning for your twenty-five week appointment, and from there we can assess
whether we should extend that, is that okay?”

Miranda nodded.

“This means you are not to go into work for the next six days. I want you off your feet except when you’re going to the bathroom and showering. No strenuous activity, no orgasms, no lifting anything heavier than a gallon of milk, can you do that?”

“Yes, of course.”

“If not, I can arrange for you to be admitted here.”

“Absolutely not,” Miranda said.

Once Miranda was situated in her bed upstairs in the townhouse, Andrea made a call to Runway to tell Nigel Miranda wouldn’t be in for the rest of the week. Nigel was relieved to hear that everything was okay, and he said he would pass the message along to Irv since even he called to check on how she was.

“Nige, do you think Rachel and Abby are okay without me there?”

“Yes, don’t worry about anything here. I can spare Emily this week, so I’ll have her look in on them. You just stay with Miranda and make sure she gets her rest. I’ll call you if there’s anything important,” he said. “Oh, and Six? Tell Miranda not to worry about anything. I’ve got it covered.”

“Thanks, Nige,” she said, ending the call. She headed back up to Miranda’s room with a glass of ginger-lemon water and a banana.

“Thank you,” Miranda said. “For everything. Andrea, you’re giving up so much for me. I don’t even know how to thank you anymore.”

Andrea crawled up on the bed next to Miranda and laid her head on her chest. “You don’t have to thank me. I just want you and these babies to be healthy. I called Nigel. He’s going to let Irv know you’ll be out this week, and he wanted me to tell you not to worry about anything,” she said.

“What about Rachel and Abby?”

“You know their names?”

Miranda rolled her eyes. “Of course I do. I know everything that goes on in my office. You were still training Abby, weren’t you?”

“Well I covered the basics. She’s been shadowing Rachel, and Nigel said he’ll have Emily look in on them. They have my number, and I sent them both emails telling them to call me right away if anything comes up,” Andrea said. “It will be fine.”

“God, what am I going to do for the next six days in this room? And what if Dr. Assaf thinks I need more bedrest?”

“Then you’ll do it. You know as well as anyone that the longer those babies have to grow inside you, the stronger and healthier they will be. And the sooner we’ll be able to bring them home.”

“I know, it’s just…what else am I going to do all day but worry about these babies?”
“Well, let’s make a list of everything that needs to get done in the next three months. And we can work on it.”

“Are you planning on staying here with me?”

“Absolutely.”

Miranda sighed in relief. “I should probably tell you something about it being unprofessional or something, but I’m just relieved I won’t be alone.”

“I do have to run out to my interview Friday morning, but Cara should be here if you need anything,” Andrea said. “So, I’m going to go get my computer and a notepad and we can start making that list.”

“No, wait,” she said, reaching out and tugging Andrea back to the bed. “We can do that later this afternoon. Right now, I just want you. That’s all.” She took Andrea’s face in her hands and kissed her so hard Andrea was sure her lips would be bruised—not that she cared.

Miranda’s lips were so soft and warm against her own, it wasn’t until her hand was cupping her breast that Andrea realized what was happening and pushed away. “Miranda, no, you can’t,” she said.

“I know, but that doesn’t mean I can’t make love to you,” she said with a shy smile. “Unless you don’t want it…”

“No, I do,” Andrea quickly replied. “I was just concerned about you.”

“Don’t be. I’ll just live in this constant state of arousal,” she joked. “I want to taste you, Andrea. Will you let me?”

She grinned and kissed Miranda, careful not to jostle her from her nook on the bed. “What would be most comfortable for you?” she asked.

“How about you undress for me, then come lay next to me?”

“I can do that,” Andrea said as she climbed off the bed. She unbuttoned her jacket and tossed it on the chair. She removed her necklace, watch, and rings, and set them on the dresser. Next, she unbuttoned her trousers and slid them down her hips, leaving them in a pile on the floor. She pulled her silk camisole off over her head and tossed it behind her. She reached around to undo her bra, but Miranda stopped her.

“Wait—let me do that,” she said quietly. Andrea crawled back onto the bed and kneeled next to Miranda, her breasts practically spilling out of the flimsy lace bra. Miranda cupped her breasts through the lace, then quickly reached around and released the clasp.

Andrea slid the bra straps down her arms and tossed the bra at the growing pile of clothes on the chair. Miranda eagerly licked and sucked Andrea’s erect nipples while she slipped her underwear off. Andrea leaned closer, balancing her weight on her elbow as she ran her fingers through Miranda’s hair with her other hand.

“No,” she said as she pulled Andrea’s hair away. “You can’t touch me. You cannot touch me like that. I just—you can’t,” Miranda said.

“Sorry,” Andrea said, laying on her back. “I almost forgot.”
Miranda sighed and tried to reposition herself to no avail. “Can you turn around? Or something? I can’t reach you,” she said. “Maybe put your feet up here by the pillows?” she asked.

Andrea repositioned herself and scooted back a little more so her sex was inches away from Miranda’s lips. It would have been fine, except this position put Miranda’s belly in her face, and she couldn’t resist pressing kisses against the smooth, taut skin as she traced her fingers in circles.

“Andrea, stop!” Miranda said, swatting her hand away. “Come back here. Maybe I’ll just have to use my fingers,” she said, pursing her lips.

“I have an idea,” Andrea said. She kneeled next to Miranda. “Can I?”

Miranda eagerly nodded and guided her hips as the young woman straddled her shoulders. As soon as her cool fingers parted her hot folds, Andrea reached out and gripped the headboard.

“Oh god—Miranda!” she cried out as her hips bucked involuntarily.

The editor hummed in pleasure as she slowly dragged her tongue down her slit. She didn’t want Andrea to come just yet, so she carefully held her folds open while her tongue darted inside, kissing and licking her everywhere except for her clit.

“Oh god…oh god…oh god…Mirandaaaa,” she cried out as she arched her back and rolled her hips, effectively grinding her clit on the woman’s nose. She felt Miranda’s hands take hold of her hips and still her movement.

Miranda reached up and cupped Andrea’s breasts, and began kneading and rolling her nipples between her fingertips, eliciting a low moan from the young woman. “Come for me, Andrea,” she whispered before she turned her lips to her aching bud, sucking it from its hood and gently biting down.

Andrea’s body trembled as her orgasm spread from her core to the tips of her toes. As heady as it felt to look down and see Miranda between her legs, she ached for the closeness and the intimacy with the other woman. As soon as she was able, she lifted her leg back over Miranda and sank into the bed next to her.

Miranda gently brushed her hair from her eyes and Andrea leaned forward, licking her come from Miranda’s chin. “Andrea…darling,” Miranda said, gently lifting her chin up. “I know I don’t say this nearly enough, but you must know how often it crosses my mind. You are gorgeous and sexy and the most beautiful, kindest, most generous person I know. And I love you with everything I have,” she said.

Andrea smiled as she gazed at the woman’s sparkling blue eyes. She couldn’t find the words to express the emotions coursing through her veins, so instead she leaned down and kissed Miranda as if her life depended on it.

Some time later, Andrea lay with her head on Miranda’s shoulder. “I’m going to take a quick shower,” she said. “Can I get you anything?”

Miranda shook her head.

When Andrea stepped out of the bathroom, she was glad she had actually put clothes on, as Caroline and Cassidy were sitting on the bed next to Miranda. “Hey girls,” she said, joining them on the giant mattress.

“Andy, did the doctor really say everything was okay?” Cassidy asked.
Miranda rolled her eyes.

“Yes, Cass. She gave your mom some medicine to help the babies grow strong, and said your mom needs a lot of rest. She’s not supposed to stand up unless she has to go to the bathroom,” Andrea said, kissing Miranda on the forehead.

“I told you,” Miranda said. “I’m fine. The babies are doing just fine. We just need some extra rest. Why don’t you girls fix a snack and then come do your homework in here?”

“Really? I thought you needed rest?” Cassidy said.

“I am resting. I’m laying down and not doing anything. I miss seeing your beautiful faces,” she said, softly poking her daughter’s nose. “When you come back upstairs, can you bring me some almond butter and crackers?”

“Yep! Be back in a bit,” she said, heading down to the kitchen with her sister.

Miranda carefully pushed herself up into a sitting position as she twisted and turned to stretch her back. Andrea was glaring at her. “What? I have to pee,” she said, getting off the bed. “Would you mind grabbing some of the extra pillows from the guest bedroom?”

When Miranda returned, Andrea was already sitting on the bed, leaning back against the headboard. “Did you hear my phone ring earlier?” she asked.

“No. Is it something at work?” Miranda asked.

“No. I have a voicemail from my mom,” she said, pressing in her code so she could listen to her message.

Miranda crawled up on the bed next to her and gently laid her hand on Andrea’s thigh, since she could see how anxious she was. She was relieved to see Andrea smiling before she put the phone down. “Everything okay?” she asked.

Andrea nodded. “My mom said, ‘How did everything work out with that woman you’re head over heels for?’ And then she said she hoped everything was good and that she’d someday get to meet her...you.”

“Well I don’t see why you can’t tell her who this mysterious woman is,” Miranda said. “I actually would love to meet your mother—see where you get your charm and good looks.”

“Maybe in a few months,” Andrea said. “Once she finds out about the babies, she won’t let you out of her sight.”

“Really?”

“Oh yes. She has been desperate for grandchildren for years. At this point, she will take what she can get.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” Miranda asked.

“Oh, well, I think she was expecting me to get pregnant, but now she’s worried she’ll be old and crippled by the time that happens.”

Miranda chuckled. “And your mother’s probably my age. Please, let’s change the subject,” she said. “I was thinking, I should probably call Helen. If she catches wind that I was in the hospital
and didn’t tell her, she would be a wreck.”

“I’m going to run downstairs and grab myself something to eat while you call her then. Did you want anything else besides almond butter?”

“Not right now. Thank you.”

Andrea spent the rest of the week keeping Miranda company and ensuring that she was, in fact, keeping to her bedrest. After the first day, Miranda was starting to go stir-crazy, so Andrea grabbed some pillows and made a comfy spot for her on the sofa in the study. They used her desk in lieu of the kitchen table, and Miranda was happy for even the minor change of scenery.

Miranda helped Andrea come up with an organized, massive to-do list for the next three months. When Andrea suggested the idea, she was thinking in terms of decorating the nursery, but Miranda began listing off everything she could possibly think of—so quickly that Andrea had to ask her to pause several times while she struggled to write it all down. In the end, though, it was probably better that she spelled everything out. Andrea was able to type up at least half of the list and send to Rachel and Abby to get started on, while the rest of the items were more personal—things that Miranda would want to do herself, most likely.

Thankfully, she didn’t have any additional spotting or contractions, either.

Andrea’s interview with The Wall Street Journal was a bit disappointing, as they were only proactively interviewing so they could easily fill a position in the event that one of their reporters left. Of course, she wasn’t in a position to pick and choose, but she was still holding out for something…well, better. Miranda had one more idea in mind, and promised Andrea she would work on it first thing next week, as soon as Dr. Assaf cleared her to go back to work.

But, of course, her appointment Monday morning didn’t go exactly as planned.

“What do you mean modified bedrest?! And for the next ten weeks? Are you out of your mind?” Miranda hissed.

“Miranda, I know you have a demanding career, but I wouldn’t ask you to do this if I didn’t think it was necessary. I know you want to deliver two healthy babies, and you and I both know that their chances of survival will only increase the longer you can carry them. Two days a week you can go into the office or run errands, or I don’t know, go for a walk. I still don’t want you to exert yourself. Try to avoid climbing stairs, you know.”

Miranda sighed and stared up at the ceiling.

“The babies are doing great. You haven’t dilated, and you’re healthy. You are doing everything right, Miranda. I don’t want that to change.”

“Can you give us a minute?” Andrea asked.

“Sure. I’ll go check and see if your bloodwork is back from the lab yet,” she said, quietly stepping out.

“Andrea, what am I going to do? I was going crazy after six days,” Miranda said.

“Well, this isn’t exactly as strict. Let’s say you go into the office on Tuesdays and Fridays from 7-4. You’d only be spending Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday at home, and you can work from your couch if you need to. In two weeks, the girls will be finished with school, so I’m sure they
will keep you busy at home.”

Miranda pursed her lips. “I suppose. Helen did already say she was going to come in for a few weeks instead of me sending the girls out to Boston.” She shook her head. “What am I even saying? There is no choice in the matter. I will do anything for these girls, even if it means staying in bed all summer.”

Andrea smiled and kissed Miranda on the forehead. “And you know, I’ll be there with you every day.”

“You spoil me, Andrea,” she said, kissing her softly on the lips.

“I can start working with the girls on your schedule—does Tuesday and Friday sound okay?”

Miranda nodded. “I’ll work from my home office for a few hours on Mondays and Thursdays, too, so arrange for Rachel to be over from 10 AM – 2 PM. And maybe we can rearrange things and bring the little desk from the guest bedroom into my office for her to use. Or you, when she’s not here. Maybe we should order a matching desk?”

“You’re getting ahead of yourself,” Andrea said. “Since the top of our list is converting the guest bedroom into a nursery, let’s just move the small desk so we don’t have to put it in storage. If I need extra space, I can take over the dining room table. I can take over that entire room, really. Have you ever used it?”

Miranda rolled her eyes. “Of course. Just, not in a few years. But Andrea, I don’t want stacks of papers and books all over my dining room.”

“Who said I was going to make a mess?”

“I’ve seen your apartment, don’t forget.”

“Well, that’s because it’s 500 square feet and I don’t have anywhere else to put it,” she said. “I’m going to call Emily now and explain that you’re not coming in today.”

“There are some items I need from my office if I’m going to work from home. I’ll just be ten minutes.”

Andrea glared at her.

“Don’t look at me like that. I won’t have you making me feel guilty for this,” she said. “I know my body, and I’m only going in for some folders, a thumb drive, and my notebook.”

“I can run up and get it for you.”

“No. You will stay in the car. This is not up for debate,” she said, sitting up on the exam table.

The doctor gently knocked on the door before re-entering the room. “CBC came back. Your iron is a little low,” she said. “Iron supplements have a tendency to cause constipation, so I’m hesitant to suggest that. Why don’t you try to incorporate some extra iron into your diet and see if that helps bring it up—things like spinach, lean red meat, beans, and almonds. I’d like to see you back in 2-3 weeks, then for the remainder of the third trimester we’ll probably want to see you on a weekly basis.”

“Thank you,” Miranda said quietly.
When they were in the car on the way to Runway, Andrea leaned over and kissed Miranda gently on the cheek. “I’m sorry for what I said earlier. I’m just a worrywart. I love you and want to protect you.”

“I know. And I don’t mean to be unappreciative, really. I love when you’re protective. It’s been so long since I had someone who loved me like that. I’m just not used to it, that’s all. Once these babies are here, I hope you will channel that fierce protectiveness towards them,” she said.

“Of course I will,” she said tracing her hand gently along Miranda’s belly. The car slowed to a stop outside of Elias-Clarke. “I’ll be waiting for you,” she said.

Miranda nodded. “Two more months and they’ll be here,” she said. “Maybe I can bring them to work with me while they’re still babies.”

Andrea rolled her eyes. “Well, then no one would get any work done.”

“That’s true. Well, I’ll just be a few minutes. I’ll text you if something comes up,” she said.

Andrea smiled and nodded, and quickly sent off a message to Emily as soon as Miranda left the car: *She’s on her way up. She needs to rest—go easy on the surprise! I’ll be up in a few minutes.* She waited until she saw Miranda disappear inside the elevator, then climbed out of the town car and followed her up to the 18th floor.

When Miranda stepped off the elevators, Nigel was waiting for her. “Thank god you’re back,” he said, taking her by the arm. “You would not believe the item we just received from Brittany at DVF—come here, it’s in the conference room.”

Miranda stopped at the outer office where Abby was answering the phones. “Nigel, I just came to pick up a few things. The doctor put me on a modified bedrest for the remainder of the pregnancy,” she said with a sigh.

“Are you feeling okay? Nothing’s wrong?” he asked, slightly embarrassed he hadn’t checked on her first.

“Yes, yes, I’m fine. My doctor seems to think it’s because I’ve been laying low, so she wants me to keep it up.”

“How far are you now?”

Miranda rolled her eyes. “Only twenty-five weeks. I’m just over halfway. I don’t understand how some women can do this for forty weeks,” she said.

“When were the girls born—or, I guess I’m going to have to start saying ‘Caroline & Cassidy,’” he said.

Miranda chuckled. “Thirty-one weeks. But then they were in the hospital for so long,” she said.

“I remember. You had to come back to work a few days after they came home,” Nigel said.

“If I would have taken better care of myself and listened to my doctor when he told me to rest, I think they would have been stronger.”

“You can’t think like that, Miranda. Especially since you have two healthy, beautiful daughters.”

“I know, but I’m already bigger with this pregnancy than I ever was with the girls. I just don’t
know if I can handle watching them hooked up to machines,” she said.

Seeing that she was getting weepy, Nigel quickly changed the subject and led her to the conference room. Her eyes widened as she saw the room entirely decorated in pink and white bunting, bows, and balloons.

“Oh my god,” she said, stopping in her tracks and covering her mouth with her hand.

Nigel smiled and squeezed her hand. “It’s hard to have a surprise party in a conference room that has windows on three sides, but I hope you’re still surprised,” he said, opening the door and guiding her inside.

Miranda’s eyes scanned the room and it brought a tear to her eye. She recognized the faces of nearly her entire staff, and they were standing in front of the side table which was stacked high with wrapped gifts.

Emily and Serena stepped forward. “We all wanted to congratulate you and wish you and your daughters-to-be the best,” Emily said.

“And, I know at least some of us wanted to gush over how amazing you look. Pregnancy really suits you, Miranda,” Serena said. Everyone quietly agreed.

“I—I don’t know what to say,” Miranda said as Emily led her to a chair. “I’m so overwhelmed. I wasn’t expecting any of this at all.” She looked over at the gift table and the cookie tray in the center of the table and began to cry.

“Where is Andrea?” Emily frantically whispered to Nigel. He only shrugged in reply.

“Thank you all—so much,” Miranda said. “This is all so incredibly generous…”

Rachel saw that Miranda was awkwardly at a loss for words, so she stepped up. “Everyone, I know we all have loads to do today, and we don’t want to keep you from your work. Please help yourself to some iced green tea with lemon and ginger and cookies—they’re vegan, sugar-free, gluten-free, and not processed near nuts. I’m not sure how long Miranda can stay today, but maybe we can convince her to open a few special gifts,” she said, looking over at the editor.

Abby appeared out of nowhere and set two beautifully wrapped boxes on the table in front of Miranda, then she brought in a white, wooden twin cradle with a big pink bow and set it at Miranda’s feet.

“Oh my goodness,” Miranda said, looking down at it. It was about two feet high and four feet long, and was designed to sit on the floor and gently rock back and forth. There was a dividing wall that could be added in the center to separate the babies. “This is perfect for my office,” she said as she picked up the gift tag. All the best, Emily & Serena (PS- We’ll be happy to babysit if you ever need us!)

Miranda looked up at the couple who were standing along the wall, holding hands. “Thank you,” she said. “Does that offer also include two nine-year-olds who will be on summer break in a few weeks?” she asked with a chuckle.

“Yes, yes, of course!” Serena said.

“Even if you just book an overnight at a spa or something, we’d be happy to help.”

Miranda smiled and gently bit her lip to keep the tears at bay. “Thank you again.”
By now, Andrea had joined the group, quietly standing next to Nigel along the wall behind Miranda’s chair.

“Open that one next,” Nigel said, pointing to an iridescent green box on the table. “It arrived a few days ago and Emily could not wait to give it to you,” he said.

Miranda quickly unwrapped the box and pulled out a gorgeous, flowy aquamarine blue satin nightgown, a matching satin long robe, and a pair of matching embroidered slippers. She read the note card that was tucked into the box: *Only the best for La Reina. Will send something extraordinary when the children arrive. Besos, Oscar.*

“He designed this maternity robe just for you,” Emily said.

“Emily had fun trying to get your measurements,” Serena said, poking her.

“I actually needed a new robe. This is perfect,” she said. She picked up the other box and shook it. It was unusually light for such a large box. Unwrapping it, she gasped when she saw what was inside. “Oh Nigel. I don’t know what to say,” she said.

“Say yes. I’ll take care of everything for you,” he said.

“Yes, yes! Of course, Nigel,” Miranda said.

“What is it?” Andrea asked.

Miranda turned around and smiled. “The nursery,” she said, holding up a sketch.

Andrea smiled. “We really need to get going,” she whispered.

Miranda rolled her eyes and turned back to the room. “Again, thank you all so much. I would love to stay here and unwrap each of these generous gifts, but my doctor has rather inconveniently put me on a modified bed rest. I’ll be in the office for two days each week and working from my home for two days. Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday I will be completely off,” she said.

As the staff started to head back to work, Abby boxed up a few cookies for Miranda to take home and poured some iced tea into a tumbler with a lid. Rachel packed the gifts from Oscar and Nigel into a large bag, and Andrea helped Miranda retrieve some items from her office.

“I’ll have a driver bring the rest of these gifts over this afternoon, Miranda,” Abby said, handing her the iced tea and cookies.

Miranda nodded and headed towards the elevators. “Rachel, you will be working from the office in my home on Monday and Thursday. Arrive promptly at 9:00 AM.”

“Yes, Miranda,” she said.

“I’ve got a few things to grab, too,” Andrea said. “I’ll meet you down at the car in two minutes.”

Miranda nodded and headed into the elevator while Andrea went to talk with Rachel and Abby. She set her bags down and perched herself on the corner of Rachel’s desk. “I hope you both paid close attention today. *That* was the real Miranda Priestly, and she doesn’t make an appearance too often in public. She is a warm, caring, and appreciative person. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise,” she said. “When she needs you, you don’t hesitate—you drop everything and run to her. Sometimes it’s minor, sometimes it’s serious. Learn to distinguish the tone of her voice—it cracks when she’s scared, trails off when she’s tired, and stutters when she’s upset. When she’s
angry, she whispers.” She paused for a minute, then picked her bags back up. “I trust you two to take care of her when I can’t. Do not disappoint me.”

“So Andy, is it true?” Rachel asked. “You and Miranda, I mean.”

Andrea smiled and walked out, rushing down to meet Miranda in the car. “Sorry,” she said, sliding into the backseat as Roy put her bags in the trunk.

Miranda just ended a phone call. “Well, that was unexpected, but very pleasant. Thank you, Andrea, as I’m sure you had something to do with it,” Miranda said.

Andrea leaned over and kissed her softly on the lips. “You seemed genuinely happy.”

“I was. I am. Why is that so difficult to believe?”

“It’s not,” Andrea said. “But I can count on one hand the number of times I’ve seen you happy at work.”

“True,” she said. After several minutes of silence, Andrea received a call as they were pulling up in front of the town house.

“Hello?…Yes, this is she…oh, hello. Yes, this is a perfect time,” she said smiling over at Miranda.

Miranda quietly stayed in the car with Andrea until she ended her call. “Who was it, darling?”

“John Griffin from *The Mirror*. They have a News Editor position open and he wants to interview me tomorrow!”

“Darling, that’s wonderful,” Miranda said. “Let’s talk more inside,” she said.

Andrea quickly climbed out of the car and ran around to the other door to help Miranda out while Roy was taking the bags from the trunk into the house.

“Ooh,” Miranda groaned as she began climbing the steps to the front door. She reached down and held her hand beneath her belly.

“Are you okay?”

“I think so,” she said as Andrea helped her inside.

“Ladies, will there be anything else? I was going to head back to *Runway* to pick up the remaining gifts,” Roy said.

“No, but wait here a few minutes, please,” Andrea said.

“Not a problem. I’ll have David bring the gifts with the other car,” he said, heading back to the town car.

Miranda sat in the armchair in the foyer and kicked off her wedge sandals.

“What hurts?” Andrea asked.

“My back,” she said. “I totally forgot to wear that support belt today. I didn’t need it when I was just laying around here at home. It’s my fault—I should have remembered.”

“Do you want me to start a warm bath for you? Or do you want to lie down for a while?”
“I can’t go up the stairs just yet,” she said. “Would you mind rubbing it for me?”

“Not at all,” she said. “Do you want to sit on the couch?” Andrea asked, helping her up.

“No, I think I’ll kneel,” she said, tossing a pillow on the ground. She lowered herself to the ground and leaned forward, resting her head on her arms on the couch.

Andrea kneeled behind her and carefully pulled up her dress before placing her hands on the woman’s lower back. “Right here?” she asked, applying gentle pressure.

“Yess,” Miranda moaned.

Andrea gently massaged her back for the next twenty minutes, until her hands were too tired to keep applying pressure.

“Thank you, darling,” Miranda said as she sat back on her heels. “I’m going to go lie down for a while,” she said.

“Can I join you?”

“Oh of course,” Miranda said, taking Andrea’s hand and standing up. “You don’t have to ask.”

Upstairs, the two women fell asleep quickly. It wasn’t until the girls came running upstairs after school that they woke.

“Mom, what are all those presents?!” Caroline asked. “Oh, sorry,” she said quietly, shutting the door.

“What’s going on?” Cassidy whispered.

“Mom was sleeping and I think I woke her up.”

“Girls, get in here,” Miranda said.

Caroline took a deep breath and walked over to Miranda’s bedside. “I’m sorry, Mom,” she said.

“Sweetheart, you didn’t do anything wrong. I fell asleep for far too long. Apparently Andrea had the same problem,” she said, looking over at the sleepy-eyed brunette.

“Sorry,” she said as she sat up. “Hey girls.”

“Hey, Andy,” they replied.

“So, Mom, what are all those gifts downstairs?” Caroline asked again.

“My staff at Runway surprised me with a baby shower this morning. I didn’t get to open all the presents, so maybe you girls can help me this evening?” Miranda said.

“Yes!”

“Awesome!”

Miranda chuckled and pushed herself up into a sitting position. “Why don’t you girls get started on your homework in the kitchen. I’ll be downstairs in a minute and make a snack for you.”

“We can do that ourselves,” Cassidy said. “You don’t have to come down.”
“Sweetie, I slept through lunch and I’m starving,” she said, gently tickling her daughter.

“Will Andy stay tonight?”

“Yes, sweetheart,” she said without looking back at Andrea. “I think she’s going to be here every night now.”

That evening, Miranda and the girls opened all of the gifts from the shower, and once again, she was completely overwhelmed at everyone’s generosity. Andrea carefully took notes regarding who gave what, knowing Miranda would likely want to send personal thank you notes.

“This is a lot of stuff, Mom. Where is it all going to go?” Cassidy asked.

“We’re going to remodel the guest bedroom, and that’s going to be their nursery. Uncle Nigel is taking care of that for me. It’s going to look something like this,” she said, hand the girls the sketch he gave her.

“Oh my god, that’s so cool!” Cassidy said.

“Yes, it’s very cool,” Miranda said with a smile.

“How little are the babies going to be when they’re born?” Caroline asked, holding up one of the onesies.

“Hopefully they’ll be big and strong,” Andrea said. “Since there are two of them, they’re going to get kind of squished and not have a lot of room to grow, but if your mom keeps resting and eating and taking care of herself, I’m sure they’ll be perfect. These onesies might even be too small for them!” she said.

“Or they might be too small,” Miranda said quietly.

“Girls, did you finish your homework?” Andrea asked. They nodded in reply. “Why don’t you head upstairs and get ready for bed. It’s getting late. We’ll be up in a few minutes.” Once the girls were upstairs, she looked over at Miranda and saw the tears falling down her cheeks.

“What if something happens?” Miranda asked through her tears. “We have all this baby stuff. Two of everything. We’re going to redo the guest room. I just couldn’t bear it if we didn’t bring two babies home.”

Andrea wrapped her arm around Miranda’s shoulder and held her close. “We will handle it. Whatever happens, we will deal,” she whispered, pressing a kiss to the top of Miranda’s head.

“It feels real now,” Miranda said as she looked across the living room floor: blankets, towels, bedding, toys, bottles, burp cloths, car seats. “What if I can’t do it?”

Andrea softly lifted her chin and looked her in the eye. “You are the most determined and capable person I know. You have so many people supporting you, please don’t think this way,” she said.

“That’s just that many more people to disappoint,” Miranda said.

“Tomorrow, let’s look through that list of midwives that Dr. Assaf sent over. Maybe we can interview a few and then finalize that birth plan you were working on, okay?”

Miranda took a deep breath and sat up, wiping the tears from her eyes. “Yes,” she said, nodding.

“Want to head upstairs?”
Miranda shook her head. “I’m going to stay down here for a while. Will you make sure the girls are in bed?”

Andrea nodded and headed upstairs.

The next few weeks passed without incident. Miranda interviewed several midwives over the phone and finally settled on Alice, a middle-aged woman from South Africa. She called several times a week, and stopped by a few times to check on Miranda and get to know her better.

Andrea’s interview for The Mirror went well, and John offered her the position on one condition: she wouldn’t be able to start until September 1st because he didn’t have it in the budget. Andrea was relieved that she wouldn’t have to leave Miranda alone so soon, and this gave her the opportunity to spend some time training with the current News Editor, unpaid, of course. Since leaving Runway and moving in with Miranda, she found she didn’t really have any expenses, though, so it was okay.

Miranda made final adjustments to the nursery plans, and Nigel scheduled the remodel for the weekend of June 6th. The girls would be with James that weekend, and she and Andrea would head to a suite at The Four Seasons for an extended spa weekend until construction was complete. Nigel was sending Andrea photos of the renovation throughout the weekend, and she knew Miranda would love it. He even managed to put a daybed in the loft on the fourth floor, so someone else could stay the night if needed.

The following week, Helen stayed with them, and between Andrea, Rachel, Caroline, Cassidy, Helen, Cara, and occasionally Alice, Miranda was feeling perfectly pampered. She cut back to working from the office only one day a week, and she actually met with several designers and models in her home when it had been necessary.

At her thirty-one-week appointment, Dr. Assaf was very pleased with her progress. The babies weighed 3 lbs 10 oz and 3 lbs 3 oz, and they both measured over 17 inches in length. Once again, her cervical swab was negative for fibronectin, but her cervix was beginning to dilate.

“Miranda, you’re at 2” right now, and I’m not concerned as long as you aren’t feeling cramping or bleeding. I know we should continue to take every precaution, so I’m going to tell you to keep doing what you’re doing in terms of modified bed rest and what not,” Dr. Assaf said. “Now, I want to be honest with you. I never expected you to make it this far with the pregnancy, especially after those preterm contractions a few weeks ago. If we were to induce you today, I am fully confident your baby girls would be just fine. Ideally, we want them to stay in the womb as long as possible, though, because of course, that means less time in the NICU.”

Miranda nodded.

“If you haven’t started going over labor techniques with Alice, I would suggest you do so. You’re still planning on a natural delivery?”

“Yes,” she said, “if all goes well.”

“Excellent. I’d like to see you back next week—every week from here on out. The babies will be rapidly gaining weight now, and you’re likely to be more uncomfortable and unsteady on your feet. Be careful, don’t drive, keep the stairs to a minimum, you know,” she said.

“Thank you,” Miranda said.

Miranda finally decided to officially go on maternity leave at that point. Irv was supportive, and
she had absolute confidence in Nigel running the show. On Friday afternoon, Miranda was sitting at the kitchen table reading the news on her iPad when the doorbell rang.

“I’ll see who it is,” Andrea called, running down the stairs. “Hi, can I help you?”

“Andrea, is it?” the woman at the door said.

“Yes, I’m sorry, I don’t know you,” she said, cautiously stepping out onto the porch.

“I didn’t expect you would, dear. Myra Ravitz,” she said, reaching out her hand.

“Oh, Mrs. Ravitz, I’m so sorry. Please, come in,” she said.

“I was hoping to see Miranda for a few minutes—is she available? I don’t want to bother her if she’s resting,” she said.

Miranda emerged from the kitchen and greeted Myra in the foyer with air kisses.

“Oh honey, you look wonderful,” Myra said.

“Miranda, it’s been ages,” Miranda said as she led her to the comfortable chairs in the den. “What brings you by? It’s good to see you.”

“Well, Irv has obviously told me about the pregnancy and dear Andrea,” she said looking over at the young woman. “I just wanted to come by and congratulate you. And bring a gift.”

“Myra, you didn’t have to.”

“Please. I spoke with Emily and Rachel, and they said you would be keeping the babies in your room for a while, and, well, I have two beautiful white bassinets that were never used, and…” her voice trailed off.

Miranda moved closer to Myra on the couch and took her hands. “My god,” she whispered. “I’m so sorry, Myra. I can’t imagine how difficult this is.”

Myra sniffled and wiped her eyes. “I held onto them for so long, hoping that, I don’t know…and then when our boys came along, they were already too big for the bassinets. I couldn’t get rid of them. But now, if they can be of use…”

Miranda squeezed her hands. “Yes, they will be perfect. We’ve been busy and haven’t even had a chance to shop for them yet. Thank you so much,” she said, “and give Irv our thanks, too.”

“Take care of yourself, Miranda,” she said, standing up. “If it’s alright, I’d like to come by again once the babies are home.”

“Of course, you’re welcome any time,” Miranda said.

“Can I have someone drop them off tomorrow? They’re in boxes, but I can have him set them up if you need.”

“Tomorrow is fine, and I don’t think we’re ready to set them up just yet, but thank you.”

“Good, well, I don’t want to keep you,” she said. “Andrea, it was lovely to meet you. Take care of her.”

“I will,” Andrea said. “Thank you again.” She closed the door behind the woman and went to meet
“What are the girls doing?” Miranda asked.

“Cassidy had her headphones on listening to some music, and Caroline was reading on her Kindle,” Andrea said, sitting next to Miranda.

“I didn’t sleep well last night,” she said. “I really just feel like shit today.”

“Why didn’t you say something earlier?”

Miranda shrugged. “I thought it would go away. I’m going to go up to bed.”

“Wait,” Andrea said, following her to the stairs. “Maybe we should call the doctor.”

“I don’t feel like putting clothes on and going in for a check-up,” she said as she tugged her aqua robe tighter around her.

“Please. Some women get nauseous and stuff when they’re going into labor. I just want to make sure you’re okay,” Andrea begged as Miranda climbed into bed.

“Relax. It’s not labor. I’ll see Dr. Assaf on Monday for my thirty-two week appointment. I’ve been feeling a few Braxton Hicks contractions today, which is why I was sitting in the chair earlier. My skin is so itchy it feels like it’s on fire, but I think that’s just from everything stretching so much to fit these growing babies,” she said. “Oh, and my ankles and breasts are swollen. Was there something I missed?”

“What can I do?” Andrea asked. “Rub your feet? Slather some lotion on your skin? Massage your breasts?” she asked with a wink.

Miranda chuckled. “Definitely not that, though I am going to need a larger bra if you want to find me one. The feet and lotion sound good, though. Oh, and you might as well bring me some water,” she added.

On Monday, at her thirty-two week appointment, Miranda was moving a lot slower than she had been the previous week. Dr. Assaf once again assured her that both babies were doing well as they were nearly five pounds each. Their amniotic fluid had begun to diminish, which Miranda already ascertained as she noticed imprints of tiny hands and feet on her belly when they were trying to move around.

The doctor also confirmed what Andrea had pointed out the day before: that she had “dropped” and Twin A had moved into her pelvis. During her vaginal exam, Dr. Assaf found that Miranda was nearly 80% effaced. The ultrasound revealed that Twin B was in a breech position, so she advised Miranda to try and encourage the baby to flip if she could.

Miranda presented her birth plan to Dr. Assaf at this point, and after reviewing, she was happy to accommodate her wishes. Dr. Assaf advised Miranda to also begin massaging and stretching her perineum in preparation for birth, a task which Andrea was happy to help with.

That afternoon, Andrea curled up on the couch with Miranda as they shopped online for a baby monitor for the babies’ room. They quickly decided on one that could be accessed from anywhere via an app on an iPhone or iPad.

Later that week when Andrea was sitting on the couch with the girls, Miranda walked over and
handed her a folder as she took a seat on the armchair next to them.

“What’s this?” Andrea said.

“Mom is this—what you talked to us about last week?” Cassidy asked.

Miranda smiled and nodded, and both girls were clearly excited. “Andrea, I spoke with the girls and we all want you to be part of these babies’ lives forever. In that folder is a pre-birth order that I’ve already filled out. If you agree, and sign where indicated, we can file this immediately, and your name can be listed on their birth certificates.”

Andrea’s eyes widened as she looked between Miranda and the folder on her lap. “Ho—how is this possible?”

“Technically,” Miranda explained, “it’s a second-parent adoption. I know we haven’t really talked about all this in detail, but I wanted to do this before it was too late.”

“What do you mean?”

“The process is actually much more complicated once the children are born.”

“Oh,” Andrea said. “Wait, what am I saying. Of course! Oh my god, I couldn’t want anything more,” she said, tearing up.

Caroline hugged Andrea tightly and whispered something in her ear, causing Andrea’s eyes to widen once again as she softly cupped the young girl’s cheek.

“Sweetie,” Andrea said, “you know you’ll have to talk to your dad about that.”

Caroline pursed her lips in a very Mirandaesque gesture and crossed her arms over her chest. “See, Cass? I told you she wouldn’t want us.”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa,” Andrea said. “I did not say that. I love you two just as much as I love those babies,” she said, gesturing towards Miranda. “But you have a father who loves you very much, too, and it would be unfair to try to take you from him. Even if it’s not on paper, I want you two to know this.”

“Can we call Dad?” Caroline asked.

“Absolutely not,” Miranda said. “We will discuss this later. You can’t just go springing this on people, Caroline. Please go upstairs and give me a minute with Andrea.”

“Yes, Mom.”

“Sorry, Mom. Sorry, Andy,” Caroline said, heading up to her room.

“Andrea, I—”

“No, it’s okay. Miranda, I’m so touched that you want me to be part of their life in such a permanent way. I want it, too. And I want you in my life in a permanent way,” she said as she walked over and kneeled next to Miranda’s chair.

“As do I,” Miranda said. “This is rather inconvenient timing, but I really need to go to the bathroom.”

Andrea smiled and helped her from her chair.
“Andrea?” Miranda called from the bathroom.

She quickly poked her head inside, her eyes widening in surprise when Miranda held out her underwear. “If that’s what I think it is, that is really gross,” she said, chuckling.

“I know,” Miranda said. “I don’t know what to do with it.”

“Throw it away. I’ll get you a clean pair of underwear,” she said.

“Andrea, a mucus plug is most certainly not the grossest thing you’ll be seeing in the next few months,” Miranda said, rolling her eyes as she dropped the ruined panties into the bathroom wastebasket.

“I know, and I’m not squeamish, but it doesn’t mean I want to see it,” she said, running upstairs to grab clean panties.

When she returned, she helped Miranda into the panties, then captured her lips in a kiss.

“What was that for?” Miranda asked.

“When we were talking about permanency before. I love you and I can’t imagine my life without you in it,” she said.

“I want to explain what the girls were talking about. When Leslee was researching options for me, she learned about this second-parent adoption, which would allow you to be almost like a third parent for the girls. James and I would still retain our parental rights, but if something happened to both James and myself, you would legally be their parent. I mean, it’s not really necessary. I know Helen and George would totally support you, but I think the girls are getting a little jealous of all the attention—and these babies aren’t even born yet.”

“Yeah, I was noticing that, too. When was Helen going to come back?”

“Two weeks, but we may need her sooner,” Miranda said with a smile. “But back to the girls—I actually brought this up to James. He’s fine with it.”

“Oh, wow. Um, okay…”

“I don’t want to rush you. Take your time and think about it,” she said.

“I just need to call my mom and fill her in on everything. Not like she’s going to disagree or tell me not to do it, I just know she’ll be hurt if I tell her, ’Oh, by the way, you have four grandchildren now,’” Andrea said.

“And a daughter-in-law,” Miranda added.

“Yes,” she said, smiling and kissing Miranda once more. “A daughter-in-law who is due for another perineal massage, no?”

Miranda moaned as Andrea softly kissed the skin behind her ear. “Jesus, Andrea. I need you so badly,” she whispered.

“Miranda, you know we have to wait.”

“I know, I know,” she groaned, pushing Andrea away. “Is it bad that I’m looking forward to this labor just so you can touch me again?”
“Still planning on that orgasmic birth?” Andrea asked, smiling.

“Well, even with painful contractions, I can’t think of anything else I’d rather be doing,” she said.

“I’m really looking forward to this, Miranda,” she said, taking her hand.

“To what?”

“Our future.”

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On Monday afternoon, Miranda was resting upstairs while Andrea and the girls worked to prepare dinner. Andrea was cleaning some chicken breasts and mincing garlic while the girls were peeling potatoes and cleaning green beans.

It was July 7th, and temperatures in New York were in the upper 90s. Since there were two separate air conditioners for the townhouse, Miranda insisted on the second floor being kept at an icy 64 degrees, and the other inhabitants of the house could wear a hoodie or stay on the first floor.

“Okay, girls,” Andrea said as she covered the dish of chicken and placed it into the refrigerator to marinate. “Why don’t you go clean up? We’ll let Cara finish dinner when she gets back from the market, and maybe we can take a walk for some fro-yo later. I’m going to go check on your mom and see if she needs anything.”

The girls nodded and headed to the first floor bathroom to wash their hands while Andrea threw a wool sweater on before going upstairs. Seeing that Miranda was sleeping, she quietly shut the door behind her and crawled into bed next to her—or technically, next to the pillow. It was as close as she could get without waking the woman. Since the babies were kicking so much last night, neither of them got much sleep, but she was glad to see Miranda resting comfortably.

A short time later, Miranda woke. She turned and saw Andrea curled up under the comforter next to her. Only the top of her hair was visible. Miranda pushed herself up to use the bathroom, and the moment she was sitting on the bed, she could feel something was different. She pressed her hand to the mattress and it felt as if someone poured a glass of water on it.

“Andrea,” she said, leaning back and nudging the young woman. “Darling.”

“Hey,” she said, peeking her head out from under the covers. “How are you doing?”

“My water broke.”

“What?!” Andrea said, quickly jumping up.

Miranda chuckled. “Relax, I’m okay,” she said.

“Right,” Andrea said, straightening up and walking calmly to Miranda’s side of the bed. “Do you think they’ll give you medicine to stop the labor again?”

Miranda shook her head. “Not if my water has broken. This is it.”

Andrea leaned over and kissed her lips, lacing her fingers in Miranda’s hair. “I love you,” she said when they parted for air.

“I love you, too.”

Andrea reached out and helped Miranda off the bed. “Have you had any contractions?”
“No, I—” Miranda gasped as she felt her belly cramping. She exhaled after a few seconds and met Andrea’s eyes. “There’s your answer,” she said. “I’m going to use the bathroom and change. Is that black crossover bra clean?”

“Here,” Andrea said, pulling it out of the laundry basket, along with a pair of black capri-length leggings. “Are you okay?”

“Yes. Have Rachel or Emily come sit with the girls, please.”

Andrea nodded and quickly dialed Emily. “Hey Em, her water broke so we’re going to head to the hospital. Can you or Rachel or someone come sit with the girls? I know they’re going to be anxious.”

“Of course. Serena and I will actually come by. Do you need me to do anything else?” she asked.

“No, just keep your fingers crossed!” Andrea said.

“The bassinets!” Miranda called from the bathroom.

Andrea rolled her eyes. “Did you hear that? Miranda says the bassinets need to be assembled. Can you take care of that, too?”

“But Andrea, you don’t expect the babies home tonight, do you?”

“Em, just…please?”

“Yes, yes, of course. Ok, we’re hopping into a cab now. Text us when you get there and everything!”

Andrea quickly said goodbye and hung up the phone. “Em and Serena are on their way. Did you want to throw on that DVF caftan?”

“Yes, that’s fine,” Miranda called from the bathroom. “We don’t have to hurry. I’m fine, really.”

Andrea pulled the caftan out of the closet while she dialed Roy. “Hey Roy, are you downstairs?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Perfect. We’ll be down in a few minutes. Can you get everything setup?”

“Towel and water and all?”

“Yep.”

“Will do, Andy,” he said.

Andrea ended the call and looked up as Miranda waddled out of the bathroom in her soft, stretchy bra and leggings.

“What?” she asked, reaching for the caftan.

“Nothing. You just look incredible.”

Miranda rolled her eyes. She picked up her phone from the nightstand and handed it to Andrea as she looked at herself in the mirror. “I should have had my hair cut last week,” she said. “It’s getting shaggy,” she said.
“Here,” Andrea said, fishing a bobby pin from her own hair. She pinned back Miranda’s bangs and handed her her sunglasses.

“Oh Andrea, this looks ridiculous.”

“Do you remember the day you got home from Mexico—on New Year’s Eve?” she asked. Miranda nodded. “Your hair was longer like this, and you had your bangs pinned back,” she said, gently tracing her fingertips across Miranda’s face. “And your cheeks were pink and freckled. At that moment, I knew…”

Miranda closed the distance between them, kissing Andrea hard. When they finally parted, Miranda took a deep breath. “Did you call Alice or Dr. Assaf?”

Andrea shook her head, still a little lightheaded from that kiss. “I’ll text Alice. Can you text Dr. Assaf?”

Miranda nodded. While they were still standing there with their phones, Andrea gathered Miranda’s robe and a few toiletries from the bathroom and added them to the expandable Longchamp bag she was taking to the hospital.

“Did we forget anything?” she asked.

“No, I think we’re ready,” Miranda said with a smile. She slowly followed her down the stairs, where both her daughters were waiting anxiously.

“Are you going to have the babies now, Mom?” Caroline asked.

“Yes, Bobbsey,” she said, hugging and kissing each of them. “Now, I love you both so so so much, you know that, right?” They nodded. “Emily and Serena are coming by, so be good for them. Maybe you can come to the hospital to visit tonight—we’ll let you know.”

They nodded, and Andrea and Miranda headed out to the waiting town car. Roy helped Miranda into the car, and she hardly noticed the fluffy black towel she was sitting on. Andrea handed her a bottle of water, and she took several sips. Surprisingly, she didn’t say a word about the heat and humidity.

“Roy, when we bring the babies home, we will need the carseats installed,” Miranda said.

“They’re in the BMW already.”

“Oh, okay,” Miranda said. “And they’ve been properly installed? They’re safe?”

“Yes, Miranda.”

“And what about the car? Can you check the tires, oil, whatever else there is?”

Roy smiled and looked up in the rearview mirror as they approached a stoplight. “We traded in your BMW for the current year model last week. It’s brand new, everything is functioning perfectly,” he said.

Andrea looked over and could see that Miranda was getting nervous. “Don’t worry,” she said, taking her hand. “It’s all taken care of. Just worry about you and those babies right now, okay?”

Miranda nodded and closed her eyes, squeezing Andrea’s hand tightly.

“Is that a contraction?” Andrea asked.
A few seconds later, Miranda exhaled. “Yes, but it’s shooting out from my back.”

“What can I do for you?” Andrea asked, softly rubbing circles on Miranda’s back as she leaned forward.

“Right now? Just keep doing what you’re doing. Maybe a little more pressure,” she said. “In general, I want you to make decisions when I can’t. I really want to do this without medication or forceps or that god awful vacuum device, but I know anything can happen. Andrea, I trust you to make that call.”

“I promise I will,” Andrea said, gently kissing Miranda’s shoulder.

“If it comes to a point,” Miranda said as she wiped the tears from her eyes. “If it comes to a point where it’s me or the babies—I need you to do what’s best for them.”

“What?” Andrea froze. “No, no, no…don’t say that. Don’t make me do that, Miranda.”

“Listen,” she said, firmly taking her hands. “I talked with James the other day. We signed the papers naming you as a second parent for the girls. He has them, all you have to do is sign. Promise me you will take care of my girls,” she said.

Andrea could no longer keep the tears from cascading down her cheeks. “No, no. We are not having this conversation now. If the babies are in distress, I’ll let them give you medication or do a C-section or whatever, but then they will do everything they can for both you and the babies. Everything,” she said. She looked up at Miranda. “I can’t believe you just—“ her voice cracked and she turned away, sobbing into her hands.

“I’m sorry,” Miranda said softly, her hand resting on Andrea’s shoulder. “I didn’t realize how upset you would be. We won’t talk about that anymore today. I was just…I don’t know, scared. Terrified, really.”

Andrea sat up, and Miranda gently wiped the mascara from her cheeks. “I’ll be with you. You’ll be fine,” she said, squeezing her hand. “But if you do change your mind, I won’t think any less of you.”

Miranda smiled. “No, I want to do this. I didn’t get a chance to do this with the girls, and I know it will be painful but I want to,” she said. “By the way, you look like hell,” she added with a smirk. “People are going to think I’m bringing you in for treatment.”

Andrea shook her head and laughed, kissing Miranda softly on the cheek. “I love you, even when you’re snarky.”

“Will you stay close to me today?” Miranda said as she softly wiped the mascara from under Andrea’s eyes. “For the entire time?”

“Oh course. I’m not going anywhere,” she said as she squeezed Miranda’s hand.

“I mean, closer than holding my hand,” Miranda said, blushing slightly. “I want to feel you holding me—your hands on me. I promise I won’t be one of those cliches telling you to leave me alone.”

Andrea wrapped her arm tightly around Miranda’s shoulders. “I know you’re scared,” she said, “but I can promise you that I will do nothing but smother you with affection and encouragement today.”

Miranda chuckled and kissed Andrea softly. “We haven’t even picked out names yet—do you
realize that?”

Andrea shrugged. “Names can be spontaneous. I’m sure you’ll think of something—just not Bobbsey or the girls will be jealous,” she said.

Miranda laughed, then reached around to clutch her belly. “Andrea, don’t make me laugh,” she said as she leaned forward further, resting on the seat back in front of her.

Andrea smoothed her hands down Miranda’s back and she began applying firm pressure by moving her thumbs in small circles over Miranda’s lower back, just above her hips.

Miranda hummed quietly as she arched into the woman’s touch. “That feels really good,” she said.

After a few minutes, Andrea stilled her hands. “We’re here,” Andrea said quietly as Roy pulled up to the dedicated Labor & Delivery entrance at the hospital.

Roy got out to open the door for Miranda, but one of the nurses beat him to it. She helped Miranda into a wheelchair, and began pushing her into the building.

“Wait—” Miranda said.

“Wait!” Andrea called, tossing her bags over her shoulder and catching up to them at the entrance. She took Miranda’s hand and smiled down at her as the nurse led them upstairs to their room.

In the room, Dr. Assaf was already waiting. “Well, congratulations on making it this far, Miranda. How are you doing?” she asked.

“Good, I think. I’m ready for this,” she said as Andrea helped her onto the table.

“Excellent,” she said.

Andrea helped Miranda get her leggings off, and Dr. Assaf tugged her panties down just far enough so she could examine her.

“So, your water broke this afternoon?”

“Yes, about an hour ago—maybe a little after one o’clock.”

Dr. Assaf nodded. “Have you had any contractions?”

“A few. They were pretty mild, and mostly in my back,” Miranda said.

“Good. You’re fully effaced and dilated about 3.5 centimeters right now. Everything seems to be progressing beautifully,” she said, walking over and grabbing the fetal monitors. “I’m going to strap these two bands to your belly so we can check the babies’ heart rates and monitor your uterine contractions,” she said. “I know you asked for intermittent monitoring, but because this is still a high-risk birth, I need to make sure the babies’ blood pressure does not drop when you’re having a contraction.”

“I can feel one starting—” Miranda said before she closed her eyes and reached for Andrea’s hand.

“Yes, I can see it here on the monitor,” the doctor said.

“It’s not that bad—it’s just my back,” Miranda said.

“Well, it looks like all is well with the babies,” Dr. Assaf said. “Let me check your blood pressure
next. Will Alice be coming?"

“Yes, she’s on her way,” Andrea said.

“Good.” Dr. Assaf wrapped the blood pressure cuff around Miranda’s arm and quietly listened for her pressure. “Okay, it’s on the high end of normal, but perfectly in line with what we’ve seen from you throughout the pregnancy.” She removed the cuff and stood at the end of the hospital bed while Andrea helped Miranda back into her panties and leggings. “Miranda, I know you want to do this without drugs. Every relevant member of our staff has been instructed in regards to your birth plan, and they will adhere to it as long as it remains safe for you and your babies,” Dr. Assaf said as she began to disconnect Miranda from the monitor. “That being said, I encourage you to walk around and use various positions and equipment in the room to both progress your labor and ease your pain. If there’s anything you need, Jennifer, my nurse, will be just around the corner. I’ll be back shortly to check on your progress. But Miranda, I have to warn you,” Dr. Assaf said, “do not do anything to exhaust yourself. Labor could realistically progress for the next fifteen hours without intervention.”

“Thank you,” Miranda said, sighing as she sat up. Once the doctor left the room, she climbed off the table and began to walk around, exploring the room. She paused for several minutes at the windowsill, which overlooked Bryant Park.

Andrea gently pressed her palms to Miranda’s lower back as she leaned forward against the ledge, swaying softly as she endured another contraction. Once it was over, she continued to walk around the room, pausing to take a drink from the bottle of water Andrea offered every so often.

Miranda wandered into the bathroom and gestured for Andrea to wait outside. “What about Cordelia?” Miranda asked as she walked over towards the bed and took a seat on the edge. She quickly realized that was quite uncomfortable and walked over to the other side of the room where there was a gymnastics mat spread on the ground next to a large exercise ball and several chairs and stools of various sizes. Miranda lowered herself to her knees and leaned forward, gently swirling her hips in the air, arching her back as she experienced another contraction. “So, Andrea. Do you like the name Cordelia?”

“Oh! I didn’t know what you mean. Yes, it’s—it’s nice. We could call her Corie,” Andrea said.

“What makes you think I want their names shortened?” Miranda said with a smirk.

Andrea shook her head. “One of these days, you’re going to slip and call me Andy,” she said. “And then all nicknames are fair game.”

Miranda rolled her eyes. She was getting restless. She lifted one leg so her foot was flat on the floor, and as she went to stand, she felt an uncomfortable pressure against her cervix.

“Miranda, Andrea,” Alice said as she ran into the room out of breath. “I’m so sorry, I was stuck in traffic. How are we doing?” she asked. “That lunge is a good way to help open your pelvis,” she said, gesturing at Miranda. “How far dilated are you?”

“She was 3.5 cm when we came in, fully effaced,” Andrea said.

Miranda returned to her hands and knees as she gently rocked back and forth.

“Are the contractions getting stronger, Miranda?” she asked.

“Not really,” Miranda said. “But that lunge wasn’t very comfortable.”
“That’s okay. Perfectly normal,” she said. “I’m going to find Dr. Assaf and see if she wants to check the heart rate again,” she said.

Andrea gently massaged Miranda’s back for about ten minutes until the Alice returned with Dr. Assaf. “Come on, let’s get up,” Andrea said, helping Miranda to her feet.

She walked over to the bed, but the second Miranda laid on her back, she twisted around and sat up. “Ohhh—I can’t—not on my back,” she panted.

“Here,” Alice said, lowering the bed so it was flat. “Lie down on your left side like you do at home,” she said. “This is a great position for the babies to get oxygen, and hopefully it will help the baby to shift off your sacrum.” She turned to Andrea. “Has she been having back labor?”

Andrea nodded.

Miranda laid her head on the pillow and smiled when she noticed that the pillowcase was one of her sateen pillowcases from home. “Andrea, come here,” Miranda said.

“Behind you?” she asked.

“Mm-hmm.”

Andrea quickly climbed onto the bed behind Miranda, grateful that it was not a typical tiny hospital bed. She wrapped her arm softly around her and wiggled her right knee between Miranda’s legs to help support her hips.

“Who needs a pillow when I have you?” Miranda whispered as she laced her fingers with Andrea’s own. She bent her elbow and brought Andrea’s hand up to her lips, kissing their linked hands. “Thank you so much for being here. I mean this—I would not be here, doing this if it weren’t for you. If you hadn’t—after the divorce—I would have—” she cried.

Andrea felt her body tightening with another contraction, so she held Miranda’s hand tightly and pressed soft kisses to her neck and shoulder. “It doesn’t matter. I did. I’m here. We’re going to have two beautiful baby girls soon,” she whispered in her ear.

Dr. Assaf finished reattaching the fetal monitor and watched the heart rates carefully as the contraction subsided. “Let’s see how far you’ve progressed,” she said.

Alice helped remove Miranda’s leggings and underwear. Andrea moved out of the way as Alice held Miranda’s leg up in the air for a few seconds.

“Miranda, you’re only 3.8 cm, so things are moving along, but we’re still taking it slow. Are your contractions bearable?” she asked.

“Yes,” Miranda said.

“Any nausea, vomiting, shaking, or diarrhea?”

“Diarrhea,” she said, “but just once.”

“Okay. Make sure you stay hydrated—you need about a bottle of water per hour or else we may need to put you on IV fluids, which would restrict your movement around the room.”

“Understood,” Miranda said.

“Let’s just stay here for a few more minutes until we can record another contraction,” she said.
“And I would prefer if we could keep the leggings off, is that okay?”

“Fine,” Miranda said. At this point, she really didn’t care what she was wearing.

Alice brought Miranda a glass of water with a straw, and she took a few sips before she returned to talk with Dr. Assaf and her nurse.

“Miranda, can I ask you a question?” Andrea whispered quietly.

“Why do you still feel the need to ask me that?”

“Sorry. Um…anyway, what does it feel like?”

“Well,” Miranda said, “right now it feels like I have a backache that won’t go away.”

Andrea squeezed Miranda’s hand. “I meant, the whole thing. Pregnancy, kicking, contractions—all of it.”

Miranda twisted around and looked up at the young woman in surprise.

“I mean, I’ve just always been curious,” Andrea said, gently placing her hand to Miranda’s belly.

Miranda pursed her lips as she detected a hint of sadness in Andrea’s eyes. “This is probably not the best time to ask me that question,” she said with a smile. “But I will say, it’s an amazing, humbling, and overall uncomfortable experience.”

“How bad is your backache now?” Andrea asked.

“It’s dull and steady,” she said. “Once they record the next contraction, do you think we could go for a walk or something?”

Andrea laughed. “Whatever you want. I just want to make sure you’re comfortable,” she said.

“Don’t worry, I’ll let you know if I’m not,” Miranda said. “I’m just restless, that’s all.”

“Miranda, do you want to try and sleep a little bit while your labor progresses?” Alice asked.

“Nooo,” she said. “I don’t want to make this any longer than it has to be.”

Alice nodded, then went back to watch the monitor. “Okay, here comes another contraction,” she said.

“Do you think I can’t feel that?” Miranda spat.

Andrea bit her lip and buried her face in Miranda’s neck to hide her laughter. The fact that Miranda was getting snippy was just another sign that she was in pain and uncomfortable. “Be nice to her,” she whispered.

Miranda squeezed her hand tightly as she held her breath through the contraction.

“Aren’t you supposed to breathe through those?” Andrea asked once Miranda exhaled.

“Aren’t you supposed to be supportive?” Miranda hissed as she held her breath once again.

Andrea pushed herself up and gently ran her hand down Miranda’s side. “Breathe, Miranda,” she said, “in and out.”
Miranda obeyed, and in a few seconds she opened her eyes and looked up at Andrea. “That one was a little longer,” she said. “And since you asked, it feels like the worst menstrual cramps ever—but imagine your uterus pressed up against your ribcage.”

“Ouch.”

“A bit difficult to remember to breathe during that,” Miranda said.

“I’m going to take this monitor off and let you move around a little more,” Dr. Assaf said. “Are you still doing okay?”

“Perfect,” Miranda said with a smile as she sat up on the edge of the bed.

“Great. I’m going to step out for a while, but let Jennifer know if you need anything.”

Miranda nodded and stood from the bed, pacing around the room as she sipped on another glass of water.

“Miranda, you’re going to be moving into active labor shortly, and I know you want things to move as swiftly as possible, so why don’t we try some positions that will help the pelvis to expand and encourage the babies to move into position,” Alice said.

Miranda agreed and let Alice lead her into a deep squatting position.

“I want you to hold onto this bar, though,” Alice said. “Andrea will stay behind you and keep her arms around you for added support.”

Miranda squatted down and stood up slowly, and repeated it several times.

“How does that feel?” Alice asked.

“Good, but my back is still a little sore,” she said.

Alice guided her feet backwards a bit, further from the bar. “Try this.”

The added distance forced Miranda to lean forward more when she lowered herself, and surprisingly it felt really good.

Andrea gently rubbed her shoulders and her back when Miranda was squatting, and she hooked her arms beneath Miranda’s to help her stand up so she didn’t exhaust herself.

“Do women actually give birth like this?” Miranda asked Alice.

“Yes, actually. It’s a very common position for natural childbirth because gravity is really helping to deliver the baby,” she said.

“It’s a little like a hen laying an egg,” Miranda said matter-of-factly. “Oooooh!” she gasped, tucking her chin against her chest as another contraction hit. “Oh god,” she whispered.

Andrea quickly kneeled behind Miranda so she could catch her if and when she let go of the bar. She reached her arms around Miranda’s waist and gently began rubbing a circular pattern on her belly.

Miranda moaned a few times and flexed her fingers around the bar.

“Miranda, drop to your knees,” Alice said firmly as she spotted her. Miranda let go of the bar.
“Lean forward onto your elbows,” she said.

Andrea moved her hands onto Miranda’s back, again applying firm pressure in a circular motion. Nearly a minute later, Andrea felt Miranda’s body relax as she rocked back towards her heels. “Hey,” she said softly, running her hand up and down her back, “you’re doing great.”

Alice held out a glass of water again and Miranda took a few sips from the straw.

“That one hurt really bad,” Miranda said. “It was a sharp, shooting pain.”

“Well, let’s hope that was the baby’s head rotating and turning into place,” Alice said. “If this is comfortable, why don’t you stay like this for a while?”

Miranda nodded and leaned forward once again, shifting her weight to her forearms, which were pressed against the mat. She slowly began rotating her hips while Andrea applied firm, steady counter pressure to her lower back.

The young woman soon matched her rhythm and she felt her pelvis pressed against her rear. “Andrea, I know what you’re thinking,” Miranda said.

“Really?” she said with a chuckle, gently thrusting her hips forward.

“Yeeess,” Miranda moaned as she crawled forward. “Don’t do that. We have six more weeks. Please.”

Andrea smiled and kneeled next to her. “I’m sorry. You’re just so beautiful and amazing, I couldn’t resist myself,” she said. Her brown eyes sparkled.

Miranda pushed herself up and wrapped her arms around the woman’s shoulders and kissed her with full force, sucking on her tongue and softly biting on her lower lip.

Andrea smiled and looked into Miranda’s eyes. “What was that for?”

“For teasing me,” she said, smiling. All of a sudden, her smile turned into a grimace as she closed her eyes at another contraction, tightening her grip around Andrea’s shoulders.

Andrea soothingly ran her hands down Miranda’s back and pressed kisses to her forehead and cheeks. “Breathe, Miranda,” she said.

“Andrea, you need to start exhaling,” Alice said, softly placing her hands on Miranda’s lower back. “Scream or moan or yell or grunt or something. It’s dangerous to hold your breath like that,” she cautioned.

“Ohhhhhhh,” Miranda moaned in a high-pitched tone that was almost like a squeal.

“Good, Miranda, that’s great,” Alice said. “Try to go deeper, like a growl,” she said, lowering her own pitch.

“UhhhhhhHHH,” Miranda groaned, rocking back and forth against Andrea.

“That’s perfect,” Andrea said, kissing her forehead again. “You’re doing so good. This one’s almost over now.” She reached up and tucked a stray hair behind her ear.

Miranda finally took a few deep breaths and sat up. Andrea pulled a tube of Blistex out of her pocket and smoothed some over Miranda’s lips.
“Are you still doing okay?”

Miranda nodded and handed her back an empty glass. “It feels like knives in my lower back,” she said as she twisted around, trying to get comfortable.

“How about a shower? You can let the hot water soothe your back a little,” Alice said, “and there’s a stool in there so you don’t have to stand the whole time.”

She looked to Andrea for confirmation.

“It’s up to you. Whatever feels good for you,” Andrea said, softly kissing her on the corner of her mouth.

Miranda nodded, and sat back onto her heels.

Andrea stood and reached out her hand to help Miranda up, but before getting up, she lifted one foot at a time and gently lunged to each side.

“Excellent, Miranda. That’s perfect,” Alice said.

Miranda’s grip on Andrea’s hand tightened as her belly contracted once again. This time, Andrea was able to watch as Miranda’s belly physically changed shape into something more like a rectangle.

“Okay, good, now breathe, Miranda,” Alice said. “Breathe so those babies get oxygen. You’re doing great.”

Miranda moaned and reached for her belly with her free hand. After a few minutes, she said, “Let’s try the shower,” and Andrea helped her to her feet.

Alice refreshed Miranda’s water bottles and straightened out some of the sheets while Andrea led her into the bathroom, giving the couple some privacy.

Miranda quickly let go of Andrea’s hand and rushed over to the toilet, shutting the door as she went to the bathroom.

“Miranda, can I come in?” Andrea called.

“No—wait.”

Andrea heard her flushing the toilet and peeked her head inside. “You okay?”

Miranda nodded as she washed her hands at the sink.

“Did you have diarrhea again?”

Miranda blushed and nodded.

“Good,” Andrea said. “That means the babies are working their way out, right?”

Miranda shrugged and was looking down at her hands. “I suppose. Doesn’t make it any less humiliating.”

Andrea softly lifted her chin so she could meet her eyes. “I love you—every single thing about you. Pregnancy is amazing and you have nothing to be embarrassed about, especially with me, okay?”
“Yes,” she said quietly. “Let’s try that hot water before another contraction comes.”

Andrea put the plastic chair into the shower and turned it so the back was facing the shower spray. She turned on the hot water, then helped Miranda out of her bra and panties. While Miranda was getting comfortable on the chair, she kicked off her sandals and tied her own hair up in a messy bun.

Miranda was sitting backwards on the chair and had her head resting on her forearms, folded over the chair back.

“Does this feel good?”

“Mm-hmm,” she mumbled.

After a few minutes, Andrea saw Miranda’s feet and shoulders tense up and realized she was having another contraction.

“Breathe, Miranda. Exhale like you’re blowing out a candle, remember?”


Andrea quickly turned off the hot water and began kneading Miranda’s shoulders.

“No, lower,” she said.

Andrea moved her hands down towards her shoulder blades and again began massaging.

“No, lower. Lower!”

Andrea balled her hands into fists and applied strong pressure to her lower back.

After a minute or so, Miranda’s shoulders relaxed and she lifted her head. “I’m sorry, that hot water…I was just getting dizzy,” she said.

“It’s okay, you’re doing great. Do you want to try that again or maybe go for a walk?”

“Let’s walk around,” she said.

Andrea dried off her back and legs with a towel as she stood from the chair. She helped her into her panties and bra, then after another contraction, they walked back into the room.

Miranda walked straight for the bed and laid down on her side. Alice came over and brought her something to drink.

“I thought you’d be in there longer,” she said.

“She was getting dizzy—can you check her bp?” Andrea asked.

“Of course,” she said, slipping the cuff around Miranda’s arm. “Everything’s good. While you’re laying here, do you want me to see how far you are?”

Miranda nodded, then closed her eyes, squeezing her legs together as she moaned through another contraction.

“Your contractions are about four minutes apart,” Alice said. She gently lifted Miranda’s leg and examined her cervix. “And you’ll be happy to know you’re just over 6 cm,” she added. “Are the
contractions stronger now?"

“Yes, definitely,” Miranda said.

Andrea took a few drinks from the Diet Coke she brought with her. She sat on the edge of the bed and took Miranda’s hand. “Try and get some rest,” she said.

Over the next six hours, Miranda’s labor progressed. She spent a while in bed, trying to sleep between contractions while Alice and Andrea took turns massaging her. As her contractions grew more severe, she moved to the birthing stool, and Andrea sat in front of her, gently massaging her belly while Alice applied hot packs to her lower back.

Just before midnight, Miranda moved onto a birthing ball, leaning forward against the bed and swaying slowly.

“Your contractions are less than two minutes apart,” Alice said.

Miranda moaned a nonverbal response.

“Can you still feel them coming and going?” she asked.

Miranda shook her head. “No…it’s constant.”

“You’ve been stuck at 8 cm for a while,” Alice explained, “so why don’t you try stimulating your nipples to release some oxytocin?” Miranda didn’t respond, but her continuous moaning slightly changed pitch, which Andrea understood as consent.

“Give us a minute,” Andrea said to Alice, who nodded and stepped out of the room. She gently brushed her hand along Miranda’s back and squeezed her shoulder.

Miranda turned her head to face Andrea. Her hair was matted along her hairline, and she managed a small smile.

“The babies are almost here.”

“I know,” Miranda said, nodding.

“We need to help them along a little bit. Can you palm and squeeze your nipples a little bit?”

Miranda pushed herself away from the bed so she was sitting upright and reached her hand up to her breast. “Aaahhhhh!” she cried quickly bringing both hands to rest on her knees as her contraction peaked. “You…do it,” she said.

Andrea squatted down in front of her and softly took each of her breasts in her hand, brushing her thumbs back and forth over her nipples and gently using her fingertips to simulate a sucking motion on her areolas.

After a minute, Miranda swatted her hands away and reached out for Andrea to help her off the ball. She wandered around aimlessly, leaning against the bed, the bar, the windowsill, anything. Alice came back in the room just as Miranda started to cry.

“I can’t do this,” she cried, “I can’t…I…can’t.”

“You can do this,” Andrea reassured her over and over.
Miranda wandered back to the bed and sat on the edge, holding Andrea’s hand tightly through her contraction. “I can’t,” she cried. “Andy, I don’t want to do this anymore…I just want to sleep…I want a c-section,” she said between breaths.

Andrea couldn’t hide her smile. She gently took Miranda’s face in her hands and kissed her. “You are so beautiful, Miranda. I am falling in love with you more and more every minute of the day,” she said. “You’re doing so great.”

“Get these babies out!” Miranda screamed, digging her fingernails into Andrea’s arm. “I can’t do this.”

Alice walked over and laid a cool washcloth to the back of Miranda’s neck. “Nice slow breaths, Miranda. One long breath in,” she said, inhaling, “and one slow breath out,” she said, exhaling.

Miranda climbed onto the bed and curled up on her side, gripping her belly. “I don’t want to do this, Andy,” she said, pausing to growl through another contraction. “Help me…make it stop,” she moaned.

Andrea sat on the edge of the bed and gently cupped Miranda’s cheek. “You are doing this,” she said. “You’re giving birth to two human beings. You’re amazing.” She kissed her softly on the forehead and tucked her hair behind her ear. “Look at me,” Andrea said, gently tilting her chin. “You’re almost finished. Just a little while longer and we’ll have our girls in our arms,” she said.

Miranda reached out and pushed Andrea away as she leaned towards the side of the bed. Alice quickly held out a mauve-colored basin as Miranda began vomiting.

“Andy, go get Dr. Assaf. She’s ready to start pushing,” Alice whispered over her shoulder.

Andrea turned towards the door, but the doctor was already walking in with her scrubs on. “Miranda, it sounds like you might be ready to start pushing,” she said. “I’m just going to take a quick look at your progress, okay?”

Alice softly wiped Miranda’s mouth as she turned onto her back and gave her a sip of water. The nurse pressed a fetal monitor to her belly, and Dr. Assaf pulled her stool up to the foot of the bed. “You’re fully dilated, Miranda,” Dr. Assaf said happily. “Why don’t you try pushing?” she said.

“Aaaaahhhhh!” Miranda screamed as she bore down, ignoring the searing pain in her pelvis.

“Wait!” Alice said, quickly repositioning the bed so Miranda was sitting up. “Can you feel when your contractions are coming?” she asked her.

Miranda nodded, keeping her eyes tightly shut.

“Ohhh…ohhhhh…oohhhhh,” Miranda moaned.

Andrea softly caressed her cheek and squeezed her hand tightly. “You’re doing so great, Miranda. It’s almost over. I love you so much,” she whispered. “Soon we’ll have our girls in our arms, sitting on the swing out on the back porch in Sagaponack.”

Miranda took a deep breath and pushed with all her might as her uterus contracted.
“Good, good. Keep pushing, Miranda,” Dr. Assaf directed.

Andrea softly laid her hands on Miranda’s cheeks, trying to relax her.

“Miranda, I need you to focus all your energy on your baby’s head going through your cervix,” Alice said.

“Deep breath,” Andrea reminded, softly stroking Miranda’s arm.

“AaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhH!” she screamed, her expression contorted in pain as she bore down through another contraction. They were coming in rapid succession, so everyone in the room knew birth was very close. “Ohhh fuck…oooooohh…it’s burning!” she cried.

“Good, Miranda, we can see the baby’s head,” Alice said as she held a warm cloth to her perineum, hoping to prevent any tearing. “One more big push this time.”

“You’re doing so well,” Andrea whispered, kissing the top of her head. “Think about us on that swing, watching Cass and Care play on the beach while our babies are cooing and fussing in our arms. We’re so close,” she said, softly squeezing Miranda’s shoulder.

Miranda nodded and pressed her cheek to Andrea’s hand as she took another deep breath and pushed with all her might. She exhaled as she suddenly felt less pressure on her cervix.

“Keep going, Miranda—push, push, push!” Alice directed.

“Aaahhhhh!” Miranda cried out as she pushed her daughter from her womb.

Dr. Assaf quickly reached up and placed the baby on Miranda’s chest and gently massaged her back while Alice draped a warm blanket over mom and baby.

A high-pitched wail filled the room and Miranda looked down at her baby girl in awe. “Oh my god,” she gasped, gently cradling the newborn against her chest.

“She’s beautiful,” Andrea said, kissing Miranda’s cheek. “I’m so proud of you.”

Miranda nodded and closed her eyes, gently stroking her daughter’s cheek.

“Okay, I’m going to take her to the other side of the room and clean her up, make sure her heart rate is stable, and keep her warm,” Alice said as she carefully lifted the newborn from Miranda’s chest.

Dr. Assaf snipped the umbilical cord, then pressed the fetal monitor to the side of her belly to check on the other baby. “Jen,” she said quietly, “give Miranda some oxygen.”

The nurse quickly put the oxygen mask over Miranda’s nose and mouth, instructing her to take deep breaths.

“What’s going on?” Andrea asked. “Is everything okay?”

“Everything is perfect,” Dr. Assaf said calmly, also addressing Miranda. “I just want to play it safe and ensure your other baby can breathe.”

Miranda sat there for a few minutes, resting as she tried to catch her breath. “Go,” she said to Andrea, motioning towards the corner where Alice was with the crying newborn.

“I’ll be right back,” Andrea said, kissing her forehead. She stood next to Alice in awe at the tiny
creature who was now swaddled in a pink fleece-and-satin blanket with a matching little hat. She quickly pulled out her phone and snapped a picture and sent it to Emily with a short note: *I down, I to go. Mom & baby doing fine!* “Will she need to go to the NICU?” Andrea whispered to Alice.

“No, she’s perfectly healthy. Do you want to hold her for a minute while I go get fresh blankets and everything setup for baby number two?”

Andrea smiled and picked her up, cradling her gently against her body. She had stopped crying and was now just cooing and fussing as she tried to keep her eyes open.

“Sweet pea, you are so beautiful,” she whispered, kissing the newborn softly on the top of her head. Andrea gently tapped the baby’s nose and giggled when the baby’s bore an eerie resemblance to Miranda’s infamous pursed lips.

From the other side of the room, she heard Miranda saying she felt like she needed to push. Alice came over and took the baby while Andrea ran back to Miranda’s side. Jen removed the oxygen mask. Andrea gave Miranda a few sips of water and rubbed some lip balm on her lips.

“How is she?” Miranda asked.

“She’s perfect,” Andrea said. “Absolutely perfect. Are you ready for the next one?”

Miranda nodded. “In a minute,” she said. “What do you want to call her?”

Andrea’s eyes widened. “Me? No…it’s up to you.”

Miranda shook her head and placed her hands on her belly. “I’ve already decided, this one will be Catherine. She’s stubborn and needs a formidable name,” Miranda said with a chuckle. “You pick hers,” she said nodding towards the corner of the room where Alice attended to the newborn. “Ohhh,” she moaned, gasping and sitting up more on the bed.

“I’m ready when you are, Miranda,” Dr. Assaf called.

“Deep breath in,” Andrea said, softly brushing her arm, “and push! Hard as you can, focus everything on getting this baby out so she can join her sister.”

“Good, Miranda, keep pushing,” Dr. Assaf said. “Jen, get her back on 02.”


“AaaahhhhhhhhhhaaghHAAAAHHAAaa!” Miranda screamed.

“Good. Now hold it for a minute, Miranda. Don’t push,” Dr. Assaf instructed. The baby’s head was out, and it wasn’t as pink as she would have liked, so carefully slipped her finger around the baby’s neck and loosened the restriction around her airway. “Ok, one more big push, Miranda,” she said.

In the meantime, Alice placed the newborn back in the incubator and instructed two student nurses to watch her while she returned to Miranda’s side. With the last push, the second twin made her way into the world.

Miranda sighed and took a deep breath, resting her head back against the pillow. “Why isn’t she crying?” she asked, suddenly frantic. “What’s wrong?”

“She’s fine,” Dr. Assaf said in reassurance as she quickly suctioned the newborn’s mouth and nose. Alice picked her up and laid her against Miranda’s chest. “Gently massage her back,” she said,
draping a blanket over the baby.

Miranda gently rubbed circles on the baby’s back with three fingers, and after a while, she coughed and sneezed a few times before letting out a loud, healthy wail.

Andrea didn’t realize that she had been holding her breath. Everyone in the room was.

Alice clamped the cord and reached underneath the blanket to discreetly snip it.

Miranda bent her head down and kissed the top of the infant’s hair. “Catherine. Catherine Helen Priestly,” she said quietly.

“Can I take her to get cleaned up a bit? I want to check her Apgar, too. I’m sure she’s fine, but just to be safe,” Alice said.

Miranda nodded and let the midwife take her baby off her chest. “Can you move this bed down? I want to lay back,” she said. After Jen adjusted the angle, Miranda reached out and took Andrea’s hand. “Go,” she whispered. “I’m fine. I know you want to be over there.”

Andrea smiled and kissed Miranda before prancing over to the incubators.

Miranda closed her eyes and laid back, taking a few minutes to rest while she could, but was soon awakened when Andrea lowered the railing on the bed and sat on the edge, cradling a newborn in her arms.

“How’s Catherine?” Miranda asked eagerly.

“She’s perfect,” Alice shouted over the infant’s crying. “Apgar is normal. No NICU for these babies!” she announced.

Miranda sighed in relief as tears began to stream down her face. She reached out for the baby and held her close against her chest, just kissing and cradling her.

Andrea snuck away and snapped a picture of Catherine, who was now wrapped in a pale lilac satin-fleece blanket, and sent another picture to Emily: *Meet Catherine, the newest Priestly. Mom and babies all doing fine. No NICU!*

As she walked back to Miranda’s bedside, she sent Leslee a quick text: *Miranda & babies are doing well. Happiness and good health all around.*

“Did you decide on a name?” Miranda asked.

“Callista.”

Miranda looked down at her newborn girl and smiled. “Welcome to the family, Callista,” she said. “Andrea, what’s your middle name?”

“Elizabeth.”

“Callista Elizabeth Priestly,” she said with a smile.

“You know, we get to call her ‘Callie’ and the other one ‘Kit’ because you lost our bet,” Andrea said.

“I most certainly did not lose any bet. What on earth are you talking about?”
“You called me ‘Andy’—twice.”

Miranda’s eyes widened. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You did. You screamed it out. I think you were going through transition, but all’s fair.”

Miranda rolled her eyes. “As long as they’re both healthy, I don’t really care what you call them,” she said.

“Not to interrupt you, but we need to get the placentas out, Miranda,” Dr. Assaf said. “Why don’t you try and see if—Callista, was it?—will latch on? Breastfeeding should stimulate just enough uterine contractions for the placenta to detach.”

Alice stepped in and helped Miranda free her breast from the nursing bra. She loosened the blanket around the baby so her hands were free. “Okay, now just bring the baby to the breast,” she said. With very little guidance, the newborn began suckling.

“What’s wrong?” Andrea asked.

“It’s really uncomfortable,” she said.

“Miranda, give me a few light pushes,” Dr. Assaf said. “Okay, okay, stop. You’re done.”

“That’s it?” Miranda asked. “I didn’t even feel it.”

“Give me a minute to examine and make sure it’s intact, but yes, I think that’s it.”

“Did I tear?”

“Just a tiny bit with the first one. Two stitches. I’m going to go wash up. Alice will finish cleaning you up, and then I’ll be back to answer any questions. Miranda, congratulations on your new additions.”

“Thank you,” she said. “What time is it?”

“Almost 3:00 AM.”

“So, when’s their birthday?”

“They were both born today, July 8th,” Andrea said. “Roughly twenty minutes apart. Callista was 5 pounds, 11 ounces, and Catherine was 5 pounds, 3 ounces.”

“And they’re both brunettes, like you,” Miranda said.

Andrea smiled. “Yep. This one definitely got your facial features. I swear she pursed her lips at me before,” she said. “What is your natural hair color, just out of curiosity?”

“Darling you know I don’t dye this,” Miranda said.

“No, I mean, before the white.”

“Strawberry blonde. Lighter than the girls, but then you’ve seen James and his family—they’ve all got dark hair,” she said. “Both my mother and father had dark hair. I was the strange-looking child.”

“I don’t see how anyone could ever think you were ‘strange-looking.’ You’re beautiful,” she
whispered, bending down to kiss Miranda properly on the lips.

Alice cleared her throat. “Would you like to put some clothes on? I have a hospital gown, but I figured you brought something else.”

“Oh god, I didn’t even realize,” Miranda said with a chuckle as Andrea pulled a pair of clean underwear and yoga pants from her bag. “Wait, can I take a quick shower and wash my hair?”

“Of course,” Alice said. “Why don’t I help you with that while Andrea sits with the babies?”

Miranda nodded and handed Callista over. “Do not let them out of your sight,” she said.

“Never,” Andrea said with a smile. Jen placed Catherine in a bassinet and wheeled her over closer to the bed. “Miranda,” she called after her.

Miranda stopped and turned around. Her right breast was hanging out of her nursing bra, and she wasn’t wearing any other clothes. Her cheeks were red and her hair was matted against her head, the bobby pin being the only thing keeping her bangs out of her eyes. “What?” she asked, anxious to get into the shower.

“You’re incredible,” Andrea said. “And I love you.”

Miranda smiled. She believed her.

Andrea moved off the bed and into the recliner in the corner so the nurse could change the linens on the bed. Looking down at the two tiny humans, she was overwhelmed with feelings of joy and love.

She pulled her cell phone out of her pocket and dialed Emily’s number.

“Hello? Andrea? Is everything okay?”

“Hey Em, yes it’s fine. Sorry to call in the middle of the night. Can you wake up the girls?”

“Sure, I’m heading to their rooms now. Are you sure everything is okay?”

“Yes. I just want to tell them I love them,” Andrea said.

“Just a second,” Emily said. Andrea could hear her whispering to the girls in the background.

“Andy?”

“Hi Caroline,” Andrea said. “I’m sorry to wake you up, sweetheart.”

“It’s okay,” she said groggily. “Are the babies okay?”

“Yes, Care. The babies and your mom are all doing well. Your mom is taking a shower right now. I just wanted to call to tell you I love you, sweetheart.”

After a few minutes of silence, the young girl yawned. “I love you, too, Andy.”

“Can you put your sister on? Goodnight, Caroline.”

“Sure. Goodnight, Andy. Give the babies a kiss from me.”

“Will do,” Andrea said as she bent down and slowly pressed a kiss to the newborn in her arms.
“Andy?”

“Hi Cassidy. I’m sorry to wake you up.”

“Is Mom okay?”

“Yes, sweetie. Your mom had a really long day and she’s taking a shower right now. I’m sitting here holding Callie, and I just wanted to tell you that I love you, Cassidy.”

“That’s why you woke me up? Duh, I knew that.”

Andrea chuckled. “Okay, well I just wanted to hear your voices. How would you like it if Emily and Serena brought you by the hospital before school in the morning? You could surprise your mom.”

“And see the babies?”

“Yes, and see the babies,” Andrea said. “Now go back to sleep for a few hours, sweetie.”

“Okay. See you in the morning, Andy.”

“See you soon, Cass. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight. Love you, Andy. Here’s Emily.”

“Is everything alright, Andrea?”

“Yes. Can you and Serena come by the hospital for an hour before the girls go to school?”

“Actually, James was going to pick them up in the morning. I will call and tell him to come by earlier—unless—will that be a problem?”

“No, I think it will be fine. Thanks, Em.”

“Of course. Oh, and tell Miranda we have everything setup here. The nursery is fully stocked, the bassinet is ready to go, and Helen is anxious to come in whenever Miranda gives the okay,” Emily said.

“Perfect. Thank you—both of you. I know it means a lot to Miranda that she can trust you at home. If you two and Nigel want to swing by the hospital tomorrow late afternoon, that would probably be okay. But just give me a call first.”

“Yes. And tell Miranda that Serena and I said hello and that we’re proud of her. There is no way I could ever put on thirty-five pounds and push two babies through my—well. You know. Give her our best.”

Andrea chuckled. “Will do. I gotta go, babies are crying,” she said. Setting the phone down, she carefully laid Callie in the bassinet and picked up Catherine, bouncing her gently as she held her to her chest.

Miranda emerged from the bathroom, her hair dry and perfectly styled. She was radiant, although Andrea couldn’t help but notice how heavily she was leaning on Alice’s arm.

She climbed into bed and held out her arms. “Catherine is hungry, give her here.”

Andrea carefully handed her over and watched in awe as Miranda unpinned the clasp on her
nightgown, silencing the crying newborn.

“Bring Callie up here,” she said quietly, motioning to the space next to her on the bed.

Andrea smiled at hearing the nickname roll off her tongue. She took Callie and climbed onto the bed next to Miranda.

“For the next twelve hours, they will both benefit from skin-to-skin—and it doesn’t just have to be with the mother,” Alice said as she poured Miranda a glass of water.

“Go on, darling,” Miranda said, leaning over and kissing her on the temple.

Andrea carefully unbuttoned her blouse and unwrapped the blankets that were tightly wrapped around the newborn.

“Keep her warm with the blanket,” Alice said.

“Alice, thank you for everything,” Miranda said. “Once Catherine is finished here, I think we’re going to try and catch a few hours of sleep. We will see you tomorrow morning.”

“Of course. There are nurses on call, so if you need anything, they’ll be in right away. Goodnight—and congratulations,” she said before walking out.

“Andrea, I’m so tired,” Miranda said as she leaned her head back against the pillows.

“Let’s get some rest. The girls will be fine,” she said as she slowly sat up and laid Callie in the bassinet without waking her. She wheeled the bassinet to the other side of the bed—to Miranda’s side—where the nurse had already set Catherine’s. She took the younger of the two babies from Miranda’s arms and quietly laid her next to her sister.

Andrea dimmed the lights before she returned to Miranda’s bedside. “Can I lower this?” she asked. Miranda nodded, and Andrea carefully lowered the bed so Miranda could truly lay down and relax. “Come here,” she said.

Andrea kicked off her shoes and climbed into bed next to Miranda. “I’m so proud of you, Miranda. I love you so much,” she said, kissing her softly on the lips.

“Mmm,” Miranda hummed. “I know, go to sleep.”

Andrea smiled and tucked her head into Miranda’s neck as she pulled the blanket up and around them.

The babies slept soundly for the next three hours, as did Miranda and Andrea. The nurses came in and out a few times throughout the night to check on the babies, but Andrea was grateful that Miranda was able to rest some.

Around 7:45 AM, Andrea woke when she heard twin whispers and giggles.


“Hi, sweetheart. She will be in a second,” Andrea said, leaning over and softly kissing Miranda’s cheek. “Wake up, we have a surprise,” she whispered into her ear.

Miranda slowly opened her eyes and met Andrea’s gaze. A smile slowly crept over her lips and she reached up to brush her fingers along Andrea’s cheek. Before she could move any closer, one of
the girls coughed rather suddenly.


Andrea climbed out of the bed and threw on a sweater. She grabbed Miranda’s silk robe and helped her into it. “Why don’t you go sit on the couch over there and we’ll bring the babies,” she said.

Miranda excused herself to use the bathroom, then quickly joined her family, taking a seat on the couch between her daughters.

“You have to hold her very carefully,” Andrea told Cassidy. “Two hands at all times, and remember that a baby’s muscles aren’t strong enough to hold up their head, so you have to support it.”

“Is this Callie or Catherine?” Cassidy asked.

“Catherine.” Andrea looked up and saw Miranda showing Caroline how to hold Callie.

“They’re so cute,” Caroline said quietly.

“Yes, they are,” Miranda said. “Where is Emily? How did you get here?”

“Oh, uh, Dad brought us. He’s waiting outside.”

“He figured you wouldn’t want to see him,” Cassidy added.

“Andrea, tell him to come in. That’s ridiculous,” Miranda said. “Girls, I’m so glad you came. You have no idea how happy it makes me to see your beautiful faces. Girls, you’ve grown up so fast. I am going to need a lot of help in the next few years, and I want you to help me raise Catherine and Callie to be the same remarkable young women you two are.” She bent over and kissed each of her four daughters on the forehead.

“Miranda, congratulations,” James said when he walked in.

“Thank you,” she said, standing up to greet him.

“Can I—do you mind?” he asked.

“Of course not,” Miranda said as she wrapped her arm around Andrea’s waist. “You’ve met Andrea, right?”

“Actually, we’ve only really spoken on the phone,” Andrea said. “But it feels like we’ve known each other for a while.”

“Yes. I’m sorry, it’s nice to meet you, Andrea. Congratulations to you, too. I’m glad you were here for Miranda,” he said.

James sat with the girls as they all fawned over the newborn twins. “Miranda, they’re absolutely perfect,” he said.

“I know,” she said, resting her head against Andrea’s shoulder.

Just then, Catherine began to fidget and cry, and Cassidy quickly handed her over to her mother. Miranda held her and quietly tried to rock her back to sleep, but before long, Callie was crying, too.

“Girls, come on,” James said. “We’ve got to get you to school. Maybe you can come back tonight
if it’s okay with your mom—after you finish your homework.”

Miranda nodded and said goodbye to her daughters and ex-husband as she and Andrea attempted to quiet the babies’ cries. Miranda sat in the recliner and unlatched her gown so Catherine could begin feeding. “I so wish you could help with this,” she said.

“When you pump, we could take turns feeding them from a bottle—would that help?”

Miranda shook her head. “No, it’s fine. I want to spend time bonding with them both. It’s just, I’m ready to go back to sleep right now, and I have to sit through not one, but two of them,” she said.

“Okay,” Andrea said. “Why don’t you move to the bed. I’m sure it would be more comfortable.” She helped her up from the chair and over to the bed. “I’m going to ask the nurse for some diapers,” she said, heading towards the hallway.

“Andy, is everything okay?” Jen asked.

“Yeah. Two things—first, where are the diapers?”

“Here,” she said, pulling a large stack out of the drawer at the desk. “What else?”

“Well, Miranda is really tired. I remember reading about a breastfeeding position where she could lie down on the bed—do you know anything about that?”

“Yes, a lot of mothers find that’s the easiest for them to get rest. Sharon, one of our lactation consultants, just came in. Should I send her in?” she asked.

“Yes, please. If for nothing else, just a little reassurance,” Andrea said. “Thanks for the diapers!”

Andrea carried Callie over to the changing table and carefully put a clean diaper on her. She quieted down, and for a minute, Andrea played with her there, gently holding her hands and kissing her tummy and her toes.

“Knock knock,” Sharon said as she entered the room. “Hi Miranda, I’m Sharon, and I’m a lactation consultant.”

“Oh, I really don’t think—“

“Just give me ten minutes, then I’ll go away,” she said.

Miranda shrugged.

“Okay, so I’m sure you know the basics. I just wanted to introduce you to a few different positions, and give you a few tips for relief once your milk comes in. Since these babies are only about eight hours old, you’re still producing colostrum, which is a thick, sticky, nutrient-rich food for the babies. I’m sure you’re exhausted, so I wanted to show you a position where you can lie down alongside the baby.”

“Okay, Catherine’s just about finished,” she said. “Andrea?”

“Right here,” she said, taking Catherine from her arms. Miranda smiled as Andrea cradled her two babies.

“Miranda, if you can scoot over towards the middle of the bed and lay on your right side,” Sharon said as she lowered the bed flat. “Stretch your right arm up and lie on your arm—that’s it—and release your right breast from your gown.” She reached out and took Callie from Andrea’s arms,
positioning her flat on the bed.

“Can she get enough milk—or colostrum, whatever—in this position?” Miranda asked.

“Yes. This is a very natural position for her, and as long as you’re careful, you can close your eyes and get some rest, too.”

“Careful about what?” Miranda asked as she gently stroked her daughter’s forehead.

“Well, if you’re alone, you’ll want to ensure that you stay awake so you don’t accidentally roll on top of the baby or, in a few months, so that she doesn’t roll off the bed,” Sharon explained. “And of course, once your milk comes in, you’ll probably want to lay a burp cloth on the bed or else you’ll be changing the sheets several times a day.”

“Oh, of course.”

“Can I ask how you’re doing other than that? Any pain or discomfort?”

“Some mild cramping, but otherwise I’m doing well. Just need some sleep,” Miranda said. “Unfortunately I was spoiled these past few months—I was on bed rest and really got more than enough sleep.”

“Well, I’m sure you’ll adjust. Looks like you have a very helpful partner, here.”

“I do. I certainly do,” she said.

“Well, if you need anything else, just ask for me. I’ll try to check in on you later tonight before my shift’s over if that’s okay.”

“That will be fine,” Miranda said, closing her eyes.

After changing Catherine’s diaper and placing her back in her bassinet, Andrea took Sharon’s place at Miranda bedside. Shortly after, Callie gently let go of Miranda’s breast. Andrea gently picked her up and held her for a few minutes before putting her back into her bassinet as she, too, was fast asleep. She crawled up on the bed next to Miranda and pulled the sheet gently over them.

Andrea wasn’t really tired, so she laid there, gazing at the woman she planned to spend the rest of her life with. Even though she fixed her hair this morning, she still pinned her bangs back with the bobby pin Andrea gave her yesterday. Without makeup, she could see the pale freckles dotting the woman’s cheekbones and along the ridge of her aquiline nose. There were tiny red dots around Miranda’s eyes, which could only be broken blood vessels that resulted from pushing so hard. She couldn’t resist lifting her hand and gently brushing the woman’s cheek.

“Mmmmh.”

Andrea smiled and stilled her hand, not wanting to rouse Miranda from her sleep.

“Do the babies need me?” she asked, her eyes still closed tightly.

“No, they’re fine. Go back to sleep,” she whispered, placing a kiss on her forehead.

“Mmmkay. Love you.”

“Love you, too,” she whispered.

Some time later, Andrea had slipped out of bed to take a shower herself. First, she went out into the
hall to find the nurse and let her know Miranda was still sleeping.

“Oh, Andy, someone brought this for you. I didn’t want to bother you earlier,” the nurse said, handing a small cooler over.

“Who is it from?”

“She didn’t say. She was a petite blonde girl, very fashionable.”

Andrea smiled. “Abby. Miranda’s assistant,” she said as she looked through the cooler full of healthy, protein-packed snacks. “Thanks, Jen.”

Once she was showered and dressed in clean clothes, she cleared off the table along the wall and draped a blanket over it as a tablecloth. She set out two plates for herself and Miranda, poured Miranda a glass of Pellegrino, and began unpacking the cooler. Abby really packed everything: hard-boiled eggs, greek yogurt, granola, fresh berries and melon, cottage cheese, English muffins, almond butter, apples, and honey.

When she laid it all out on the table, she noticed a post-it in the bottom of the cooler: Call 203-929-2003 and ask for Cameron. He’ll deliver Miranda’s Starbucks order to her room in 3 min. -Abby. She would seriously have to talk to Miranda about giving Abby a raise.

After calling Cameron, she walked over and gently sat on the edge of the bed. “Miranda,” she whispered, softly kissing her on the cheek.

Miranda opened her eyes and smiled. “I can get used to being woken like that,” she said with a smile. “Are they hungry again?”

“No. They’re asleep, but you need to eat something,” Andrea said. “It’s almost noon.”

“Really? Well, I guess—“

“It’s all set at the table,” Andrea said with a smile. A soft knock on the door interrupted them. Andrea smiled and answered it, returning with a scalding venti no-foam latte.

Miranda sat up. “Oh my god, give me that,” she said, sitting up and reaching her hand out. She took a sip and hummed in delight. “This is so hot and so delicious—thank you.”

“Don’t thank me, thank Abby. She arranged it all. And she brought over all this food for you, too,” Andrea said, leading Miranda to the table.

Miranda smiled. “Well, thank you for finding her and hiring her and teaching her how to spoil me,” she said. Miranda made herself a bowl of yogurt with honey, granola, and berries while Andrea spread some almond butter on a slice of English muffin.

“How are you feeling today?” Andrea asked.

“Good. Fine.”

Andrea glared at her with one eyebrow arched.

“Okay. I’m a little sore. My legs hurt, my back is sore, my abdomen feels like it’s been a heavyweight punching bag, and my—“ she waved her hand, gesturing between her legs, “feels like…I don’t even know. It’s uncomfortable.”

“I can check with the nurse and see if she can give you some ibuprofen or something,” Andrea
“That’s fine. I’m fine, really. I didn’t expect this to be painless,” Miranda said as she finished her yogurt. “Maybe you can rub my back later?”

Andrea chuckled. “Of course. I can have a massage therapist come in if you’d prefer,” she offered.

“No. Then for sure I’ll be sore. I would rather you do it,” she said, gazing into the brunette’s eyes. Their gaze was punctuated by a high-pitched wail on the other side of the room.

“I’ll go keep her quiet for a while,” Andrea said. “You just relax and finish eating.”

Miranda watched as the young woman picked up Catherine and cradled her in her arms while she moved around the room. Miranda finished eating and walked up behind the young woman, wrapping her arm around her waist and laying her head on her shoulder. “Andrea, I love you so much. Seeing you here with the babies like this—I’m just overwhelmed. Thank you for loving me, for loving us.”

Andrea turned around and kissed Miranda’s lips. The only thing keeping them from taking it any further was Catherine’s little hand that reached up and touched Miranda’s chin.

“Come here, baby,” Miranda said, taking Catherine from her arms. “You are my beautiful baby girl who would not stop kicking me these past few months, aren’t you? You just couldn’t wait to get out so I could hold you, right? Your mommies love you so very much,” she whispered, softly kissing the baby’s forehead.

They spent the rest of the day relaxing and cuddling with the babies. Miranda experienced a few strong contractions that afternoon, but the doctor reassured her that it was simply her uterus trying to shrink itself down to size.

“I want to go home,” Miranda said quietly. “I want to sleep in our bed. I want to lock the door and kiss you.” It was Wednesday morning and she was curled up against Andrea’s body.

“I know you do, but you know the pediatrician wants to keep the babies for observation for at least another twenty-four hours—probably until Friday,” Andrea said. “Actually, if you want to go and get some rest, I’ll stay here with them. But kissing with the door locked does sound romantic,” she added.

“Thank you, but no. I’m not leaving them. Plus, I’d have to pump enough for them to drink—not worth it.”

“How about we take a walk outside this afternoon? Maybe have lunch at one of the picnic tables,” Andrea suggested.

“Yes,” Miranda said. “Dr. Assaf wants me to get more exercise anyway, and maybe some fresh air could do me good.”

Their time in the hospital was spent entertaining a lot of visitors: James, Caroline & Cassidy, Emily, Serena, Nigel, Irv & Myra, Cara, and even Donatella. As grateful as she was for all that these people were doing for her while she was off work, she longed for some time to herself, just with her family. At home.

Late Thursday night James called.
“Miranda’s sleeping, I’ll have her call you back,” Andrea whispered into the phone.

“I’m awake,” Miranda said, reaching her arm out for the phone. “What?” she asked.

“Uh, my mom really wants to come in and see you, stay with the babies, you know, since you’re going home tomorrow. She wants me to pick her up from the train station this weekend, but I wanted to run it by you first,” he said.

“No. No, I just want one week to myself—just me an my family. Is that too much to ask for?” Miranda spat.

“Uh, so I’ll tell her to wait a while longer.”

“Yes. I’m their mother. I can change their diapers and feed them and bathe them. I don’t need Helen to show me how to do it!” Miranda huffed and handed the phone back to Andrea.

“James?” she asked, running out into the hallway.

“What the hell was that?” he asked.

“Uh I’m not sure. Maybe hormones or something. Please tell Helen we appreciate the offer, and I know Caroline and Cassidy are really looking forward to seeing her, but Miranda just needs a few days.”

James sighed. “She’s not going to like that.”

“I know. I’ll have the girls email her and George some photos of the babies. I’m sorry. I have to go get back to Miranda.”

“Take care,” he said.

Andrea quietly crept back into the dark room and walked over to check on the babies. Both were sleeping soundly. They were holding their own body temperature, so they were transferred from warming beds to regular bassinets. In the morning, they just needed to pass the Car Seat Test, then they could go home. She practiced holding both girls at an incline today and they were fine, so she was sure they would pass. Andrea froze when she heard sniffling coming from the bed and quickly rushed over.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” Miranda said. Her voice was hoarse, and Andrea realized she must have been crying for a while.

“Are you having pain? Do I need to get the nurse?”

“No, no, nothing like that. I just—” she buried her head in the pillow and began sobbing.

Andrea climbed into bed next to her and hugged her. Miranda buried her head on her shoulder and clutched her tightly, all while Andrea held her and tried to soothe her.

“Will you tell me what you’re thinking about?” Andrea asked after Miranda calmed down a bit.

“Everything. I’m exhausted and I can hardly keep my eyes open. How am I going to stay awake to take care of the babies? How am I going to go back to work like this? The babies are going to forget about me and—”
“Whoa, whoa, whoa,” Andrea said, interrupting her. “You are getting so far ahead of yourself, sweetie. Let’s take this one day at a time. Now, you have the next three months—maybe more—off work. And no matter how few hours of sleep you’ve gotten in the past during fashion weeks or whatnot, your body just spent eight months growing two human beings. And it needs a little more rest—just for now.”

“But they’re already getting bigger and I can’t just sleep through it!”

Andrea kissed Miranda’s forehead. “They’re seventy-two hours old. When they’re sleeping, you can sleep. When we get home, they can sleep with us if you want,” Andrea said.

Miranda’s eyes lit up. “You mean that? I thought you said co-sleeping was too dangerous.”

“There are risks for everything, especially when they’re this little. Putting them in a crib or bassinet is risky, too. I can have Cara take the mattress pad off the bed and secure the sheets tightly. We can put the comforter away for the summer and use that light quilt from the closet. I mean, if you still want to try it,” Andrea said.

Miranda smiled. “Yes,” she said. “I love you so much, Andrea, you know that, right?”

“I do,” she said. “Why don’t you try and get some sleep. I will be sure to wake you the minute one of them starts crying.”

“Thank you,” she said, taking Andrea’s hand and linking their fingers. Within a few minutes she was fast asleep in her lover’s arms.

Andrea couldn’t be happier.

Late Friday afternoon, Miranda and Andrea left the hospital, each of them carrying one of the babies in a carrier. Nigel, Emily, and Caroline & Cassidy walked with them, because by now, there was a significant crowd of photographers awaiting their exit. Miranda carefully draped a blanket over each carrier to shield the newborns from the cameras. As for herself, she donned a Lilly Pulitzer maxi dress with a gauzy white long cardigan and white and pink polka-dot scarf. She and Andrea both wore dark sunglasses, and she pinned her bangs back off her forehead.

Just before they reached the doors, she stopped and turned to Andrea. “Are you ready for this?”

“I am,” she said. “Let’s go home.”

Miranda exited the hospital doors with her head held high. Roy held the door open and helped her to secure Catherine’s car seat, then helped her into the backseat, where she sat between the car seats. In the meantime, Andrea walked around to the other side and secured Callie’s car seat, then hurried around to get into the passenger seat. Nigel, Emily, and the girls followed in another car.

“How are we going to fit everyone in this car?” Miranda asked once they were on the road.

“There’s a second row of seats in the back. I haven’t put them in yet,” Roy explained. “It might get tight if you have a lot of luggage or something, but for now this should work.”

Miranda nodded. She carefully removed the blankets from the carriers. Callie was sleeping soundly, but Catherine’s eyes were open wide. Miranda leaned over the carrier and kissed her on the nose while she gently tickled her tummy beneath the safety belt.

“They’re beautiful,” Roy said after a while, breaking the silence. “Congratulations, Miranda.”
“Thank you,” she said.

A few minutes later, Roy pulled into Miranda’s garage and stopped the car. “Can I help you ladies into the house?” he asked.

“No.”

“Yes.”

Andrea turned around and Miranda met her gaze with a raised eyebrow. “Miranda, you’re going to have to climb three flights of stairs. Let Roy bring the carrier in for you.”

“Fine,” she said.

Andrea unsecured Callie’s carseat, then helped Miranda from the car. “Are you doing okay?” she asked when she saw Miranda wince.

“Still a little sore. I’m fine.”

Andrea unlocked the door and entered the house, setting down the carrier on the floor in the living room. She headed back down the stairs and met Miranda, helping her up to the first floor. She made her way to the bathroom, and Roy set Catherine’s carrier on the ground next to Callie.

“Can I help with anything else?” Roy asked.

“No, we’re fine for now. Thank you,” Andrea said. The babies were fine in their carseats, so she softly knocked on the bathroom door. “Everything okay?”

“Can you get me another pad?” Miranda asked.

“Sure, here,” Andrea said, pulling one from her purse. She cracked the door open and handed it to her. “Is it still heavy?” she asked.

“I’m just moving around more today,” she said. “Let’s keep the babies down here for a while, okay?”

“Sure,” she said while Miranda washed her hands. “I’m going to grab a few pillows and things from upstairs, but I’ll be back in a second. Do you need anything?”

“Not now, thanks,” she said. Miranda made her way over to the couch and turned both carriers so they were facing her. She unbuckled both girls’ safety straps, and carefully picked up Callie, who was now awake, too.

“Oh, Callie, my sweet pea,” she whispered, kissing her on the forehead. She held her against her chest and softly rubbed her back. “Mommy loves you so much,” she whispered, kissing her temple.

Andrea came downstairs with a laundry basket full of various items. She set the basket down on the ground and handed Miranda a burp cloth, which she quickly put on her shoulder. She took a box of disposable breast pads, a pillow, and several small blankets out of the basket.

“What to eat or drink?” Andrea asked.

“Lemonade, or if we don’t have that, still water is fine.”

A few minutes later, Andrea returned with two glasses of lemonade and set them on the coasters on the table. She reached down and picked up Catherine, taking a seat on the couch next to Miranda.
“She looks tired,” Miranda said.

“I know,” Andrea said. “You know, she has your nose.”

Miranda chuckled. “I suppose she does. I thought Nigel and the girls were behind us?”

“They were going to take Caroline & Cassidy out for dinner before coming home. I hope you don’t mind—I just thought you’d appreciate getting situated before everyone came over.”

Miranda smiled. “Thank you. I suppose I shouldn’t have been so rude to James the other night. Helen only wants to help.”

“You weren’t rude, and I think she understands. It’s just that grandmother’s natural instinct,” Andrea said.

“Speaking of grandmothers, have you talked to your mom?”

“Not since before they were born. She did mention wanting to come visit to see the babies and meet you, though. Just her—not my dad.”

“That would be fine—but we really don’t have enough room for everyone to stay here,” Miranda said.

“Well we have the daybed on the fourth floor, the sofa in your office, and the girls’ play room. And the girls can even share a bed if needed,” Andrea said.

“True. Let’s hope we don’t have that many people staying over at once,” she said. “Were you waiting to call your mom for any reason?”

Andrea shrugged. “I didn’t really know how you felt about it. It’s no big deal.”

“Andrea, it is a big deal. You’re a mother now, too.”

“I know, I just feel bad taking credit. I mean, this was all you,” she said.

“I never want to hear you say that again,” Miranda snapped. “It was not all me. I’ve told you, I couldn’t have done this—any of this—without you. I’m healthy. These two beautiful baby girls are healthy, and it’s all because of you. You supported me and took care of me, physically and emotionally. Now, call your mother.”

“Now?”

“Yes.”

Andrea chuckled and pulled out her phone. “Hi, Mom,” she said.

“Andy? Hi honey, what’s going on?”

“Well, I just wanted to tell you that you have two new grandchildren,” Andrea said.

“What?! When? You said she wasn’t due until August. Are they okay?”

“Yes, everyone is doing fine. Miranda went into labor on Monday and the babies were born early Tuesday morning.”

“Oh my gosh. Honey, why didn’t you call?”
“I’m sorry. I was just so busy and overwhelmed. We just got home from the hospital tonight.”

“Well, tell me—what are their names?”

“Callista Elizabeth was five pounds, eleven ounces, and Catherine Helen was five pounds three ounces. I’ll send you a few pictures when I get off the phone,” she said.

“Oh, my. And Miranda is doing well?”

“Yes she is. It was a natural childbirth—I’m so proud of her,” Andrea said.

“Please give her my best and tell her congratulations,” she said.

“I will. Look, I have to go now, but I just wanted to let you know about the babies.”

“Thank you, honey. You take care, now. Miranda, too. I want to come visit you soon, so please let me know when I can come.”

“Will do. Thanks, Mom. Love you.”

“Oh wait! What was it you wanted to ask me about Grandma Marjorie’s locket?”

“Oh, uh, I um, I’ll email you about it.”

“Okay. I’ll look for your note. Love you, Andy.”

“Love you, too, Mom. Bye.” Andrea ended the call and placed the phone on the coffee table. “She said to tell you congratulations. She’s glad you’re doing okay.”

“You didn’t tell her about the parental rights, did you?”

“No.”

“Why? Look, if you didn’t want them—”

“Stop,” Andrea said. “Stop. I do want them, and I love them and am so grateful to you for making me a permanent part of your family like this. I just have to tread lightly with my mom. I’m afraid if I give her all this at once, she will freak.”

“Okay. But you do intend to tell her at some point?”

“Yes, of course!”

Callie started to fuss, and Miranda quickly realized she wouldn’t be able to breastfeed without removing her dress entirely. “Shoot. I have to go upstairs and change,” she said as she stood from the couch.

Andrea followed her upstairs slowly, walking behind her in case she lost her balance. Once in their bedroom, she laid Catherine in one of the bassinets and took Callie from Miranda’s arms while she changed into leggings and a tank. Andrea gestured towards the chaise, which Emily and Serena had setup as the breastfeeding station. Miranda smiled and sat down, setting a pillow on her lap as she unclasped her bra and freed her breast. Andrea handed the baby over and sat at the edge of the seat, pulling Miranda’s feet into her lap.

“Our room looks great,” Miranda said. “Remind me to thank Emily and Serena again.”
Andrea nodded and gently began to massage Miranda’s feet.

Once Callie was finished, Miranda gently lifted her onto her chest. The newborn smacked her lips and closed her eyes, sighing in satisfaction. Miranda, too, closed her eyes, but less than a minute later, Catherine began crying.

“I wonder if they’ll ever be on the same schedule,” Miranda said, sighing as she fastened her bra and set Callie in her bassinet.

“Would you breastfeed them at the same time?” Andrea asked.

“Yes. It was actually really nice when the consultant showed me in the hospital,” Miranda said, sitting back down and doing the same thing with Catherine on her other breast. “I think Callie gets more milk than Catherine.”

“But Callie is always done in like fifteen minutes and Catherine takes almost an hour,” Andrea said.

“Yeah, but she’s lazy. She stops and looks around, then starts again. We’re going to need to work on her attention span.”

“She’s four days old,” Andrea said, laughing.

“I can’t remember what the consultant said about tilting her chin,” Miranda said as she fidgeted with the crying baby in her arms.

They heard the door open and shut downstairs. “Mom? Andy?” Caroline called.

“Up here,” Miranda said. She lifted the baby and changed positions, sitting up a little more.

“Is the baby sleeping?” Caroline whispered, looking down at Callie.

“Probably. But you don’t have to whisper. Just no screaming,” Andrea said. “Where’d you go for dinner?”

“Some Italian place. We had pizza,” Cassidy said, joining them. “Whoa.”

“What, Cass?” Andrea asked. She looked over and saw that Cassidy’s gaze was transfixed on her mother feeding her baby sister.

“Do they always do that?”

“Bobbsey, come here,” Miranda said, patting the edge of the chair. “Our bodies are really smart. Remember how I told you that my body knew it needed to stretch to make room for the babies growing inside?” Both girls nodded. “Well, my body also knows that those babies were born, and need milk since they’re no longer inside of me,” Miranda explained.

“It just looks funny,” Cassidy said, scrunching up her nose.

“Does it hurt?” Caroline asked.

“Actually, it does hurt a little,” Miranda said, “but that’s because they were just born a few days ago. My body is still trying to adjust.”

“Girls,” Emily said, “why don’t we go downstairs and get dinner ready for your mom and Andrea, okay? Come with me.”
Once they were out of the room, Miranda took a deep breath. “I was just waiting for the cow comparison,” she said.

“Cow? I was thinking more along the lines of porn star,” Nigel said.

Miranda opened her eyes. “What? Porn star?”

“I mean, please don’t take this the wrong way, but your breasts look amazing—beyond amazing, really,” he said, blushing slightly.

Miranda smirked and a smile crept across her face. “This is pretty great cleavage, isn’t it?”

“Almost makes me wish I was that baby,” he said with a chuckle.

“Nigel, one more comment and I’m going to start getting jealous,” Andrea said.

“Well we wouldn’t want that,” he said. “We brought some dinner back from Spago’s—salad, chicken parmigiana, and tiramisu. Are you two hungry?”

“Yes,” Miranda said, perhaps a bit too quickly judging by the way Nigel looked at her.

“Want me to bring it up here or will you come down to the kitchen?”

“Up here,” Miranda said. “And please grab my lemonade, too. It’s on the table in the living room.”

Nigel paused in the doorway. “I’m sorry if that sounded creepy, Miranda. I meant it as a compliment. You look fabulous,” he said, quickly heading out the door and down to the kitchen.

“Andrea, do you like my breasts like this?” Miranda asked, careful to keep her eyes focused on the baby in her arms.

“Of course. I mean, they’re huge,” Andrea said. “But, I liked your breasts just fine before, you know.”

“Why didn’t you say anything?”

Andrea moved closer and lifted Miranda’s chin up. She could see the tears forming behind her eyes. “I didn’t tell you how hot you looked because I know we have to wait for you to heal. The doctor explained how swollen your labia will be for a while, and then the soreness with your milk coming in, I didn’t think you’d appreciate it. I’m sorry. You really do look amazing—even without the porn star boobs.” She leaned over and kissed Miranda softly on the lips.

Andrea leaned down and kissed Catherine on the forehead, which caused her to pull away from Miranda’s breast. “Shoot—sorry,” she said.

“It’s okay. I think she’s had enough anyway. She had a better latch this time,” Miranda said. She gently picked her up and laid her back in her bassinet.

“Did you want to go downstairs to eat since they’re both sleeping?” Andrea asked.

“No, I’m not really hungry. I’m just going to rest here for a while.”

“You need to eat something. What about some tiramisu?”

“Okay, but later.” Miranda fastened her bra and slipped on the cardigan she was wearing earlier. “You go down and eat dinner.”
Andrea nodded and made her way downstairs. Seeing the two plates on the counter, she took a seat at the barstool.

“Oh, we were going to bring this upstairs for you two. I was just trying to find the tray,” Emily said.

“This is fine,” Andrea said as she took a bite of salad. “Miranda isn’t hungry yet.”

“Okay. Is there anything else we can do?” Emily asked.

“No, thank you,” she said. “Wait, what day is today?”

“Friday, July 11th. Why?”

“The girls have a pool party tomorrow at their friend Amanda’s. Right—are you still going to that?” Andrea asked them.

“Yes, if it’s okay? Dad said he would take us.”

“Oh course. Emily, can you ask Rachel to confirm the details with Amanda’s parents, and then with James? Wait. Sorry. I will send Rachel a note,” Andrea said.

“Are you sure? It’s no bother. I know you’ll have your hands full.”

“No. Really, it’s fine. Goodnight, and thank you again!”

Once they left, Caroline and Cassidy asked if they could go upstairs to watch a movie, to which Andrea did not object. She finished her dinner in silence, then cleared the plates and loaded the dishwasher. She pulled the tiramisu out of the refrigerator, and opened a bottle of Malbec. She carefully poured two glasses, and then made her way upstairs with the plate and two spoons in one hand and the wine glasses in the other.

“What’s all this?” Miranda asked.

“Dessert,” Andrea said, sitting next to her on the chaise. She set the plate down on the chair between them, and handed Miranda one of the wine glasses. “Just a glass.”

Miranda hesitated, then took the glass from the young woman, humming quietly at her first sip in six months. They spent the next fifteen minutes sipping their wine and feeding each other bites of tiramisu. Miranda was smiling and Andrea was happy to see her in a good mood.

When they finished, Andrea took the plate and their glasses and set it on the dresser by the door. “The girls are upstairs watching a movie, and the babies are sound asleep,” Andrea said.

“We’re never going to be alone, will we?” Miranda said. “It’s going to be eighteen years before… and then…” she buried her face in her hands as she began to cry.

“That’s not true,” Andrea said, as she tried to figure out where this line of thought was coming from. “We’re alone now. And we have plenty of people who are willing to babysit so we can take a night off, or even a weekend. You know that.”

“I know, I know. I just can’t help the thoughts racing through my mind. Will you even still be here in eighteen years?” she asked.

“Of course,” she said. “I am not going anywhere. I’m not here simply to spend time alone with you—I’m here for all of it. You, the girls, friends, assistants, family, exes, all of it.” She held Miranda
tight, reassuring her while her tears subsided. She had read online about the “Baby Blues,” and if that’s what was going on, those articles certainly didn’t prepare her for dealing with two crying outbursts a day.

Just before Miranda went into labor, Andrea learned about the idea of a “push present” for the mother who just gave birth. She was hoping to put some photos into her grandmother’s locket, but didn’t have a chance to email her mother, asking her to send it just yet.

Miranda sat up and wiped her eyes. “I love you so much,” she said, kissing her gently. “Thank you.”

“Stop thanking me. I love you, too. Let’s rest for a while until the babies wake up again, okay?”

Miranda nodded and stood from the chaise. She was starting to feel a little sore from all the stairs today, so she excused herself to the bathroom and took a quick sitz bath before climbing into bed with Andrea and snuggling against the younger woman. Her belly had shrunk considerably in the past four days, and between the babies, the placentas, and excess fluids, she already lost twenty-two pounds. Regardless, they were able to lie much closer than they’d been in months. She draped her arm over Andrea’s body and pulled her closer, kissing her softly and thoroughly for what seemed like hours on end.

“Ugghh,” Miranda groaned, rolling onto her back and holding her arm across her chest.

“What?” Andrea asked.

“Nothing. Just…stay there and turn the other way. I’ll be back in a minute,” she said as she began to climb out of bed.

Andrea didn’t want to upset her, so she looked away. She heard Miranda going through a few drawers and cabinets, and it sounded like she was frustrated. “Can I help with something?” she said.

“No! No, I can find them, just give me a minute,” she said.

Andrea kept quiet, saying a silent prayer that this recent, for lack of a better word, moodiness, was temporary and not a symptom of something more serious.

“Fuck,” Miranda muttered under her breath.

Before Andrea could get out of bed, Miranda had already left the bedroom, headed to who knows where, looking for who knows what. She quickly followed after her.

“Andy? Is Mom okay?” Cassidy asked. The girls were sitting on the stairs up to the third floor, and must have seen Miranda run out of the bedroom.

“Andy? Is Mom okay?” Cassidy asked. The girls were sitting on the stairs up to the third floor, and must have seen Miranda run out of the bedroom.

Andrea walked over to them. “Yes, she’s going to be okay. Sometimes it takes a bit of time to adjust to a new situation—you know, like if you join a new club at school or something.” They nodded in understanding. “Well, we are all adjusting to having two little babies in the house, and your mom’s body is still adjusting to not having them in her belly.”

“She looked upset, though,” Cassidy said.

“Where did she go?”

“The nursery,” Caroline said.
“Okay. I’m going to go talk to your mom. Can you do me a big favor and make your mom a cup of
hot tea? You have to be really careful not to burn yourself. Put it in the travel thermos, and carry
the cup and saucer separately. Can you do that?”

They both nodded and Andrea guided them downstairs, away from the nursery. She took a deep
breath and opened the door. Miranda was sitting on the floor next to the dresser, in tears, holding a
box of disposable breast pads in her hands. Andrea quietly kneeled next to her and took her hand,
squeezing it tightly.

Miranda looked up at her through red, puffy eyes, expecting to see disappointment or annoyance.
Instead, her Andrea had the kindest smile, and her eyes were brimming with love and
understanding. She wasn’t judging her. She was accepting and supporting, and Miranda was at a
loss for words.

Andrea squeezed her hand and gently brushed her thumb over her knuckles. “The girls saw you run
in here and they were worried,” Andrea said quietly. “I told them you’re okay, and they’re
downstairs now.” She paused. When Miranda met her eyes, she asked, “Are you okay?”

Miranda shook her head as tears began to fall. “I don’t know,” she said.

Andrea took her in her arms and held her while she cried, gently stroking her back. “What
happened in there?” she asked, quietly.

“I started leaking,” Miranda said as she sat up, wiping her tears with her sleeve. “And I couldn’t
find the pads. And then,” she shrugged, picking the box up off the floor, “I couldn’t get them
open.”

“And you thought it would bother me?”

She shrugged.

“Miranda, that does not bother me. You are a beautiful woman and a beautiful mother. That is
perfectly natural,” she said, squeezing her hand.

“I couldn’t even get the damn box open,” she said, shaking her head.

Andrea hugged her and kissed her on the cheek. “You were probably just too anxious to think
clearly,” she said. She reached down and picked up the box. “Here,” she said, handing it to her,
“try again.”

Miranda half expected Andrea to open it for her, but she could see in her eyes that she was trying to
help her regain some sense of independence. She turned the box over a few times, and when she
found the perforated seam, she pushed in with her thumbs and peeled the cardboard top off. She
rolled her eyes, but was exceedingly grateful she was able to complete the simple task herself.

“Mom?” Cassidy whispered as she softly knocked on the door.

“Yes, Bobbsey,” she said, draping the cardigan over her chest as she tried to hide the two wet
circles on her shirt.

“We made you some ginger lemon tea,” she said, walking into the nursery and sitting down next to
the women.

“We were really careful so we didn’t get burned,” Caroline added, carrying in the thermos.
Miranda took the thermos from the young girl’s hand and poured it into the teacup Cassidy held out. She took a sip and smiled. “Thank you so much, my darlings. This is perfect,” she said.

“Are Callie and Kit going to sleep all night?” Cassidy asked.

Miranda pursed her lips and glared at Andrea, who was obviously the source of that nickname. “Catherine,” she stressed, “and Callie will not be sleeping all night for a few months. They wake up to eat every few hours because their tummies are too small to hold enough food for the whole night,” Miranda said.

“So you have to get up and feed them?”

“Yes. But we are going to try having the babies sleep in our bed with us at night and see how that works,” she said.

“Did we sleep with you and Dad when we were babies?” Caroline asked.

“No. You and your sister had to stay in the hospital for a few months because you were really tiny when you were born. When we finally brought you home, you shared a crib for a while. The first night you were home, I didn’t sleep one bit. I just sat in the recliner and stared at you all night long.”

Part of her regretted not being a better mother ten years ago—not that she did anything wrong, but it was all so new to her, she wasn’t prepared. As much as she wanted a different experience with Callie and Catherine, she didn’t want her ten-year-olds to feel as if they were neglected.

“And back when you were babies, a lot of doctors advised against it because they thought babies wouldn’t want to leave their parents and it would be too difficult to transition. That’s not really the case anymore,” Andrea added.

“So this will make it easier for you to feed them at night, right?” Cassidy asked.

“Yes, much easier,” Miranda said. She glanced up at the clock. “It’s getting late. Why don’t you two head upstairs to bed. Andrea will be up in a minute to tuck you in.”

“Okay, goodnight, Mom.” Cassidy said, hugging her. Caroline did the same and then they raced each other up the stairs to their rooms.

Miranda got off the floor and handed the teacup to Andrea. “Can you take this downstairs?”

She nodded, and grabbed the plate and wine glasses from the bedroom, too. Miranda quickly changed her bra and tank, then moved her sleeping babies to the middle of the bed. She watched in awe as they seemed to calm each other back to sleep, naturally moving closer to one another so they were touching hands and feet.

Andrea quietly walked up behind Miranda. “Did you put them like that?”

“No, the were about ten inches apart when I laid them down,” she said.

“That’s amazing.”

“I know.”

“About before,” Andrea said, “I know you have a lot on your mind and your hormone levels are all off after giving birth, but I just wanted to remind you that you can talk to me. About anything. Or,
if you’re just not feeling right and want to talk to something else, we can do that, too. I’m here for you.”

Miranda squeezed Andrea’s hand and laid her head on her shoulder. “I know, and I just need to remember that. Let’s go to bed,” she said.

“I’m going to run and tuck the girls in. I’ll be back in a minute.”

Andrea went upstairs and Miranda carefully crawled into bed, trying not to disturb the sleeping babies. She forgot to turn out the dim lamp on the other side of the bedroom, but as it turned out, it was just enough light so she could see her babies’ faces in the night. She gently brushed her fingers along each of their heads.

Andrea returned and slipped into her pajamas: silk lounge pants with a tank. Tonight, since they wouldn’t be able to pull the covers up over the babies, she slipped a long sleeve tee on as well.

“Hair,” Miranda whispered.

“Oh, right.” She took a ponytail holder from the nightstand and quickly put her hair up in a messy bun before climbing into bed. She curled onto her side, mirroring Miranda’s position, and reached her left arm up, linking hands with Miranda at the head of the bed. “Goodnight, Miranda,” she whispered, blowing her a kiss.

“Goodnight, darling.”

A short while later, Callie began to fuss. Thankfully, she was closest to Miranda, so she was able to feed her quite easily. Once she was finished, Miranda whispered, “Let’s switch them,” and Andrea picked up Callie while Miranda tugged Catherine closer. Andrea softly laid her hand on the baby’s chest, gently stroking her with her thumb as she fell back asleep. On the other side of the bed, Miranda was somehow able to get Catherine to latch on without even fully waking her.

“This is working well,” Andrea whispered.

“Yes. I just need to remember to nurse from my other breast during the daytime,” she said.

A few hours later, the sound of sirens outside woke Catherine and she began wailing, which meant Callie was screaming, too. Miranda picked up Catherine and laid her on her chest, urging Andrea to do the same with Callie. A few minutes later, the babies had settled down.

“Is Catherine sleeping?”

“No. Callie?” Miranda asked.

“Nope, wide awake.”

“Wonderful.”

“On the bright side,” Andrea said, “I think they’re on the same schedule now. Do you want to try nursing them both?”

“I only know how to do that if I’m sitting up and there are pillows,” Miranda said as she repositioned herself, laying Catherine on the bed again. “Let me feed Catherine a little bit, then we’ll switch again.”

Andrea tilted her head and looked down at Callie. “You have to wait your turn, sweet pea,” she
said, softly touching her finger to the baby’s lips. Callie opened her mouth and began sucking on the tip of Andrea’s index finger. “Ouch!” she said, giggling as she pulled her hand away. “That hurt.”

Miranda chuckled. “Now, imagine that on your overly-stimulated nipple,” she said. “If you want to talk, let’s talk about how uncomfortable breastfeeding is.”

Andrea reached over and brushed Miranda’s shoulder. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to be insensitive.”

“You weren’t. I was just starting conversation. I don’t know quite what I expected—some sort of magical, pleasurable bonding experience, I suppose. It’s actually far from it.”

Andrea sat up a little and looked at Miranda. “You don’t have to do it. You can pump, and we can even introduce some formula,” Andrea said.

“No, it’s not unbearable. The benefits far outweigh the discomfort. It’s just, I don’t know, something else I wasn’t prepared for. I thought it would be one way and instead it’s the opposite.” Catherine finished nursing, and Miranda laid her in the middle of the bed. “Hold on, I need to lay on my other side,” she said as she repositioned herself. “Okay,” she said, twisting backwards so she could take Callie from Andrea.

Andrea gasped and quickly pulled Catherine to her side.

“What?” Miranda asked. “Give her here—this is uncomfortable.”

Andrea carefully passed Callie over to her, then leaned down and placed a kiss on Catherine’s forehead.

“Why did you gasp?” Miranda asked.

“When you were were reaching back, um, Catherine was kind of underneath you.”

“What?!”

“She’s fine. I moved her out of the way. But when you changed positions, I think you just moved closer to her than you thought, or she shifted. Anyway. It’s fine.” She heard Miranda sigh, so she reached out and placed a hand on her shoulder. “This is why we’re both here.”

“Do you think we should move them back to their bassinets?”

“No. It’s been half a night. Let’s give it a little more time,” Andrea said.

A few minutes later, when Callie was finished nursing, Miranda announced that she was turning back over. Andrea protectively wrapped her arm around Catherine, and Miranda set Callie back in the middle of the bed.

A few hours later, the sun peeking through the blinds woke Andrea. It was almost six o’clock in the morning. She looked down at the babies and the sight brought a tear to her eye. Miranda’s arm was draped on the mattress just above their heads. They were both on her side of the bed, and their arms were linked. Callie’s face was practically in Miranda’s armpit, and Catherine’s cheek was resting on Miranda’s hand. Andrea quietly took her iPhone off the nightstand and snapped a few photos. There was just enough light filtering in for the perfect shot.

Andrea smiled and lay back against her pillow. She knew she wouldn’t fall asleep any time soon, so she made use of the time and began typing an email to her mother.
Hi Mom,

Grandma’s locket is in a cardboard jewelry box in the top left drawer of my mirrored dresser. Can you ship it to me here? Overnight or whatever the fastest shipping speed is. I want to give it to Miranda. I know it’s not conventional, but Mom, she’s the one. I want to spend the rest of my life with her and our children. She’s been a little emotional these past few days, and I just need to reassure her that I’m in her life permanently. I guess the locket will be in place of an engagement ring or whatever.

Anyway, Miranda wanted me to tell you that we had papers drawn up and filed before the babies were born, so I’m legally their second parent. And she and her ex-husband filled out some paperwork regarding in absentia guardianship for Caroline and Cassidy (her ten-year-old daughters), too. We haven’t filed yet, but I imagine it will only be a matter of time. So, now you and dad have four granddaughters and a daughter-in-law. They’re part of my family, now, so I can only hope you’ll accept them into yours.

Last thing—we’re co-sleeping with the babies, and attached is the scene I woke up to this morning. Aren’t they just beautiful? I’m going to have this framed and matted and give it to Miranda as her “push present,” hopefully along with the locket. You asked me a few months ago if she was worth it—this photo is proof. She’s everything.

Love,

Andy

Once she sent the email, she carefully set her phone back on the nightstand and turned back to three of the most beautiful ladies in the world. She moved closer and laid her head just above Miranda’s hand.

Miranda exhaled and stretched her arm a little in her sleep, but it didn’t wake the babies. Instead, they almost appeared to mimic her movements: Callie arched her back and yawned, while Catherine kicked her feet out. Within seconds, all three of them were once again sleeping soundly.

The next day, after James came to pickup the girls for their friend’s party, Miranda and Andrea brought the babies down to the den. Callie was perfectly content snoozing in Andrea’s arms, but Catherine was wide awake. Miranda didn’t mind. She was curled up on the couch with the baby against her chest as she was flipping through the latest issue of Vogue.

“Think we can go for a walk?” Andrea asked after a while.

“Let’s wait a little. James said there were still some photographers across the street. We can go sit on the back patio for a while if you want—but later, once the sun goes down a little,” Miranda said. She put the magazine down and picked up her wide-eyed daughter, laying her along her own thighs so she could face her.

“Is she falling asleep?” Andrea asked.

“Nooo,” Miranda said in a high-pitched voice. Catherine was gripping her index finger and gazing into her mother’s eyes. “This little princess is never ever going to sleep, is she?” She leaned over and kissed her daughter.

“I love this,” Andrea said quietly.
“What?”

“This. You, me, the babies, just napping on the couches here in the living room. No emails. No deadlines. Just…us.”

“It is kind of nice, isn’t it?” She lifted Catherine and laid her on her chest as she slouched down. “Are her eyes closed?” Miranda asked.

“Almost. She’s struggling to keep them open, but I think sleep is winning.”

“Thank god. She’s been awake for nearly six hours.”

“You should probably just feed her now so she doesn’t wake up in twenty minutes screaming,” Andrea said.

“Good point.” She gently rearranged the baby and began to nurse her.

“Is that any less uncomfortable?” Andrea asked.

“Yeah, actually it is. I don’t know if they’re getting better at it or I’m just getting used to it. You know, I really think we should get them into a routine.”

“Miranda, they’re not even a week old.”

“I know. It’s just, I would really like to take a shower at some point this week,” she said.

“Why don’t you go now?” Andrea said. “I can sit here with them.”

Miranda shrugged. “Maybe after they both eat.”

About an hour later, Andrea took Callie from Miranda’s arms and laid her on the floor with her sister. She had a quilt spread out in the living room, and it seemed that the newborns enjoyed being in proximity to one another.

“Are you sure I can go up?” Miranda asked.

“Of course. Take as long as you need—we’ll be fine,” Andrea said.

“Thank you.” She got up and kissed Andrea on the cheek. “I won’t be long. When I come back you can take a shower, too, if you want.”

Two hours later, Miranda came back downstairs. Andrea was laying next to the twins on the floor, watching them sleep. She kneeled next to Andrea and gently brushed her shoulder. “Shower’s all yours if you want,” she whispered. “Sorry I took so long.”

Andrea smiled. “No problem. They just fell asleep a few minutes ago, so you should be good for a while.” She paused for a moment. “Would you rather I wait until Caroline & Cassidy get home?”

“Don’t be absurd. I’ll be fine—they’re asleep.”

Andrea nodded and stood up. She turned back and looked at Miranda, who was wearing a cotton-lycra blend halter-style maxi dress. “My god you’re beautiful,” she whispered.

Miranda looked up and blushed. “You better go upstairs, darling,” she said.

While Andrea was upstairs, she decided to lie down on the quilt with the babies and try and catch
some rest. It wasn’t long before Callie began crying, waking the three of them up. Miranda sat up and took her in her arms, gently bouncing her and trying to comfort her, but it seemed that wasn’t working. She was screaming at the top of her tiny little lungs and nothing Miranda was doing seemed to calm her down. She tried walking around the room with her, but she didn’t want to wander more than a few feet away from Catherine, who was also crying on the quilt. Miranda knelt next to her and tried to pick up her other daughter, too, but she couldn’t manage to do so and support her head at the same time.

“I’m so sorry, my darlings,” she said as tears streamed down her face. She set down Callie and picked up Catherine, who seemed to calm a little bit once in Miranda’s arms. “Are you still hungry, baby?” Miranda asked, untying her top and offering a breast to the baby. Catherine turned her face away as she started crying and screaming. “Please stop crying, baby. Please…stop, STOP!” she begged.

Callie’s cries were growing stronger—so much that she could almost hear her howls echoing in her tiny body. Miranda reluctantly set Catherine in the rocking crib and bent down to pick up Callie, again attempting to soothe her. She wasn’t hungry, she didn’t need to burp, and Miranda didn’t know what else to do. Tears streamed down her face. She was helpless to comfort her child.

She walked over to the base of the stairs, keeping an eye on Catherine in the crib. “Andrea!” she called out. “Andrea!!” she called again. Her own tears took over again and she knelt next to the cradle, putting Callie in there with her sister. For a few minutes, it seemed to quiet them, but Callie soon began to howl again.

Miranda gently rocked their cradle as she cried, begging and pleading with them. “Andrea, where are you?” she cried.

A short while later, Andrea came running downstairs in Miranda’s robe, her wet hair wrapped up in a turban-style towel. “Miranda! What’s wrong?” she asked, running to her side.

“They won’t—they won’t stop crying,” Miranda said, letting go of the cradle and burying her face in her hands.

Andrea took a deep breath. “Are they hungry?” she asked.

Miranda shrugged. “I don’t know. I can’t tell,” she said.

“Okay. Okay. Come here, sweetie,” she said, picking up Callie from the cradle. “Can you pick up Catherine? Let’s take them upstairs.”

Miranda nodded and took her little girl, following Andrea and Callista up the stairs. After a few minutes, it seemed like Callie was calming down. Andrea was walking around the room, gently bouncing her.

“Here,” Andrea said, handing Callie to Miranda. “Try feeding her now. Let’s trade.”

Again, Miranda didn’t say anything, she just did as Andrea told her, and climbed up onto the bed where the pillows were already setup. She gently brushed her fingers along Callie’s cheek and under her chin until she latched on. Meanwhile, Andrea changed Catherine’s diaper and rocked her to sleep, setting her gently in her bassinet. Once Callie was finished feeding, Andrea took her, changed her diaper, and also laid her in her bassinet.

Andrea unwrapped the towel from her hair and tossed it on the chair. Miranda was curled up on the bed, her face buried in a pillow. “Miranda,” she said, climbing onto the bed next to her.
“Don’t. I can’t, not now. Just—save it,” Miranda muttered.

“I love you,” Andrea said, gently curling up behind the woman. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I just want to tell you how much I love you.”

Miranda turned around to face her. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. “But—I, I failed. I couldn’t get them back to sleep. I needed you.”

“Sweetheart, needing someone doesn’t mean failure,” Andrea said, kissing her lightly on the forehead. “Babies are…well, babies. They cry, sometimes for no reason. All we can do is hold them and love them and take care of their basic needs. You did more than that.”

Miranda sniffled and wiped the tears from her eyes. “I couldn’t even pick them both up. I thought that maybe if I could hold both of them… Andrea, I can’t do this.”

“Hey, relax,” Andrea said, hugging her tightly. “Until they can support their own heads, the only way you can hold them both is if someone hands the second baby to you and places her in your arms. You can do this, Miranda. You can—you are doing this.”

Miranda quietly cried against her shoulder as Andrea soothingly traced circles on her back. After a while, Miranda’s tears waned. Just when Andrea thought the older woman had fallen asleep, she heard a quiet whisper. “Don’t leave me alone with them. Promise me.”

Andrea kissed the top of her head. “I’m not going anywhere,” she said. She hugged her tightly, then pulled away and looked into her eyes. “Are you tired?”

“No really.”

“Then come downstairs with me,” Andrea said. “The iPad is already down there, so we can watch them on the cameras.”

Miranda sat up and wiped her eyes. “Give me a minute—I need to wash my face,” she said, heading into the bathroom. That gave Andrea just enough time to slip out of the bathrobe and into some pants and a tank.

“Can you pump a little now?” Andrea asked as they walked down the stairs.

“Why? I thought we weren’t—“

“I want to be able to feed them,” Andrea said, cutting her off. It wasn’t entirely true. Sure, she did want to feed them, but more than anything, she wanted to relieve some of the burden from Miranda, who was already more than a little overwhelmed.

“Oh. Well, I guess. Of course, what am I saying? I’m sorry, I didn’t realize it bothered you,” Miranda said.

Andrea shrugged. “It’s okay. I get that you want to feed them, and it makes sense. But just once in a while would be nice.”

“Of course, darling. All you have to do is ask. I can get the pump all setup now,” she said. “We didn’t eat lunch, did we?”

Andrea shook her head. “I’ll go make something light,” she said, wandering off into the kitchen. She filled two pitas with lettuce, egg salad, and a few slices of tomato, then carried it into the living room with two bottles of water. Miranda was already situated on the couch, connected to the dual
pump on a small folding table. She set their lunch on the coffee table and climbed on the couch behind Miranda.

“What are you doing?” Miranda asked. She craned her neck, but couldn’t turn her upper body because of the pump.

“Just going to massage your back and shoulders a little. Is that okay?” she asked as she softly laid her hands on the expanse of porcelain skin. She gently kneaded Miranda’s shoulders, then began moving her hands downward, applying steady pressure with the palm of her hand.


Andrea smiled and softly kissed her shoulder. Miranda tilted her head downward, and Andrea trailed kisses up to her ear. Teasingly, she licked the woman’s earlobe and dragged it between her teeth.

Miranda gasped and arched her back. Andrea pressed a few gentle kisses to the nape of her neck and smoothed her hands across Miranda’s shoulders and down her arms until their hands were linked. Andrea’s body was pressed against Miranda’s back and she could feel the older woman’s ragged breathing.

Andrea leaned forward and whispered into Miranda’s ear, “You don’t have to worry about leaking.”

Miranda started laughing. She detached herself from the pump and pulled her dress back up, handing the ties over her shoulder for Andrea to tie. “I do love you, Andrea. You are my sunshine.”

Once she tied the halter, she softly kissed Miranda’s shoulder. “I’ll put the milk away and be right back,” she said. “Need anything else?”

Miranda shook her head and took a sip of her water. When Andrea returned, they enjoyed lunch while watching the twins sleep on the monitor.

“Are you doing okay?” Andrea asked cautiously as she set her empty plate back on the table.

Miranda took a deep breath and set her own plate down. “Come here,” she said, opening her arms so Andrea could lie against her chest. “I don’t know if I could say this if you were looking at me, so let’s just stay like this for a while, hmm?

Andrea wrapped her arm around Miranda’s waist and gently pressed a kiss to her chest. “Take your time,” she said.

“I’m okay when you’re here,” she said with a sigh. “But earlier, and last night—I don’t know what happened. I could feel myself starting to panic. I was terrified. Everything raced through my mind so quickly, and I just lost it.”

Andrea gently stroked her arm. It was exactly the reassurance she needed.

“I know, in my mind, that I can do this. I know, in my mind, that you’re just in the other room. I know this, and yet, it’s as if I can’t convince myself those thoughts are real. I was afraid that my babies were going to die right there in that cradle. I actually thought they were going to cry themselves to death. All while I sat there, helpless, just watching them suffer.”

“Miranda, you’re a wonderful mother,” Andrea said quietly.
“I know that. I mean, maybe not wonderful, but certainly capable. And it helps when Caroline and Cassidy are around, because they’re living proof,” she said.

“So are Callie and Catherine,” Andrea said. She sat up, but kept her eyes downward. “Is it okay if I look up?”

Miranda nodded. She softly kissed the young woman before she settled back against her chest.

“Thank you for being so honest—I know that’s not easy. I’m sorry I was in the shower for so long. I should have left the door open or something,” she said.

“No, sweetheart. You have nothing to apologize for. This is a big change for all of us.”

They sat in silence together for a few minutes. Hearing cries coming from the iPad, Andrea sat up. “Maybe it’s just one of them,” she said, getting up and running up the stairs. A few minutes later, she came down with Catherine, who looked like she was ready to fall asleep again. Andrea returned to her seat on the couch, curled up against Miranda, except this time she held the baby on her chest.

“When is Cara coming back?” Miranda asked.

“Monday, unless we need her sooner. Why?”

“No reason. Actually, that’s a lie. The laundry hampers are full. I’ve been going through multiple shirts a day, and of course we want to use clean towels and blankets for the babies.”

“Do you need me to do a load of laundry? You know, we could actually take the opportunity to teach Caroline and Cassidy how to use the washing machine,” Andrea said with a smile.

“That may not be a bad idea,” Miranda said. “I was thinking of calling Helen tonight. Would you mind if she came in for a few weeks?”

“Why would I mind?” Andrea asked. “It’s your house.”

“Darling, you live here, too. And, I realize you don’t really know Helen. You kind of ran off to your apartment last time she was here. She’s very understanding, and she will give us privacy when we want. I promise, she’s not like your stereotypical mother-in-law.”

“I never thought she was. It’s just—you’re obviously close with her. You basically just referred to her as your mother. I didn’t want to interfere with your relationship,” Andrea said. “And I can’t exactly run back to my apartment now anyway. I’m subletting, and the couple has already moved in.”

“Promise you won’t pout and be jealous when she’s here?” Miranda asked, gently kissing her on the forehead.

“What?! Of course not. You just have to be as nice to my mother as I am to Helen.”

“Did you decide when she’ll come visit?”

“Probably not until August. But seriously, if you want Helen to come, call her. I don’t mind.”

“Okay. I’m going to run upstairs and call her now. I’ll bring Callie back down when she wakes up. Is Catherine hungry?”

“Nope. We’re both perfectly content.”
Miranda smiled and headed towards the stairs. “Oh—can you text James and see when to expect the girls home?”

“Sure thing.” Andrea pulled her phone out and saw she already had a text waiting from James: 
Taking the girls back to my place for dinner after their party. Will bring them back later tonight. You & M okay? Need anything?

Andrea smiled as she typed her response: Great. We’re good, thx!

Since Miranda was upstairs and would be for a while longer, Andrea called Emily and asked a favor. She didn’t know if Miranda was comfortable with Abby or Rachel seeing such a personal photo, but she knew that she wouldn’t mind Nigel and Emily.

“Andrea, that is a gorgeous photo,” Emily said.

“Can you just have Nigel touch it up a tiny bit? I love how real it looks, but I want Miranda to be willing to hang this in our bedroom, too. She’ll have to look at it every day,” Andrea explained.

“Of course. I think it would look beautiful in black and white—would that be okay?”

“Sure. Whatever you think. I do want a small version of the original—color, no retouching—to put on my desk at work, though.”

“Consider it done. What about a frame? Miranda has the Grosvenor frames in the bedroom, right?”

“Yeah, so whatever you think will look right. And the baby photos of the girls?”

“I got those, too. How small?” Emily asked.

“About the size of your thumbnail. It’s for a locket.”

“Only you would try to cram four children into a locket,” she said. “Fine. I’ll have everything for you Sunday evening. Can I bring it over?”

“Sure. But bring a bunch of random bags from Runway so she’s not suspicious. Actually, she probably needs more clothes—tops, especially.”

“Will do. Anything else?”

“No. Thank you so much, Em. Seriously. I owe you,” she said.

“Just make sure you keep Miranda happy. If she’s happy, I’m happy.”

Andrea thanked her again, then ended the call. She scrolled through her emails and saw that her mother mailed the locket and it would be arriving tomorrow. “I hope your mommy likes it,” Andrea whispered, kissing Catherine gently.

“Likes what?” Miranda said, coming down the stairs with Callie in her arms.

“Can’t tell you,” Andrea said. “It’s a secret.”

“Don’t be teaching my daughters to keep secrets from me,” she said with a chuckle. “I spoke with Helen. She’s going to take the first train in on Monday morning, and I already had Rachel arrange for Roy to meet her at the station.”

“Great,” Andrea said. “James is bringing the girls over later tonight—he took them back to his
They settled into a routine over the next few days. Helen arrived Monday morning, and she acted every bit the proud grandmother. Miranda also seemed more relaxed in the older woman’s presence, so for that, Andrea was incredibly grateful.

With all the commotion Monday morning, the twins missed their nap, and the exhaustion was wearing on everyone’s faces. Miranda and Andrea took the babies upstairs. Catherine fell asleep right away, but Callie kept waking up the minute Miranda would set her in the bassinet.

After attempting to set her in the bassinet for the third time, Miranda carried her back to the bed and climbed up. She laid against the pillows and cradled her daughter against her chest. “I’ll lay here with her,” Miranda said.

“Do you want me to stay up here with you?” Andrea asked.

“No, I’ll be fine,” Miranda said.

Andrea took Miranda’s phone from the nightstand and set it on the bed next to her. “I love you. Get some rest.” She gently shut the door and made her way downstairs, where Helen, Caroline, and Cassidy were cleaning up after lunch.

“Are the babies asleep?” Caroline asked.

“Yes, finally. Callie didn’t want to sleep in her bassinet, though, so your mom is laying with her in bed,” Andrea said.

“Girls, why don’t you go find a movie and put it on in the living room. I’m going to talk with Andy for a little bit, then we’ll come join you,” Helen said.

Andrea smiled at the girls and nodded. Once they left the room she turned to Helen. “I just wanted to say—”

“How is Miranda doing?” Helen asked.

“Um, I think she’s okay. Why?”

“She started crying when I spoke with her on Saturday,” Helen explained. “She said she was fine, but she didn’t know why she was crying. Have you upset her?”

Andrea could feel her emotions surfacing, her fists clenching at her sides. “No. I did not upset her. I have done nothing but support her and love her.”

“Andy, you’ll have to excuse me, because I really don’t know you. There must be something. In the fifteen years that I’ve known Miranda, the only time she cried in front of me was the day she buried her mother.”

“Listen,” Andrea said. “Miranda cares about you, so I can’t ask you to leave, but please. You don’t know me, so please stop making accusations.” Andrea began pacing in the kitchen as she thought of what to say next. “Miranda has been up and down since we brought the girls home. Mostly,
she’s fine, but there have been a few times when she was completely overwhelmed and broke down. We talk about it. She—she talks to me about what she’s feeling. It’s only been six days since the babies were born, and I think her body is still adjusting to the hormones, or lack thereof. And, I might add, that I’ve seen Miranda cry at least once a week these past six months. I don’t think it’s as unusual as you make it seem.”

Helen stared at Andrea for a few minutes, not saying a word. “She loves you.”

Andrea smiled. “I know. I love her, too.”

“I can see that,” Helen said. “I love her, too. She’s like a daughter to me.”

“I know, and I respect that. She enjoys having you around.”

“If you hurt her, I will—”

Andrea gently placed her hand on Helen’s forearm. “I won’t hurt her,” she said quickly. “I’m in this forever.”

Helen’s eyes widened. “Are you—do you mean—are you engaged?”

“Not yet, but I want to give her something tonight, I just want to run it by the girls first.”

Helen’s eyebrow arched up.

“And you,” Andrea quickly added. “I am planning to give her my grandmother’s locket,” she said, pulling it out of her pocket. I put pictures of the four girls in there. It’s not a traditional ring, but it’s my promise that I’ll be here for her forever.”

Helen took the locket in her hand and turned it over a few times before handing it back to Andrea. She had tears in her eyes, but Andrea didn’t want to press. “It’s lovely. The girls and I can entertain the babies for a while later if you want to give it to her privately,” she said.

“Thank you. And thank you for being here. I know it means a lot to Miranda,” she said.

Helen nodded and turned back to the dishes in the sink. Andrea headed into the living room, putting the DVD on pause before she sat down in front of the girls.

“Care, Cass,” she said, “you know I love your mom. I love her more than anything in the world, except maybe you two and your two baby sisters. I want to give your mom something that’s special—something that is my promise to her that I will love you and be here for you forever.”

“Are you going to ask her to marry you?” Cass asked, grinning.

“No, sweetheart. Your mom and I haven’t talked about that yet. You know there would be a lot of photographers and stuff involved with that, too. At some point in the future, if your mom agrees, I would very much like to marry her, though. Don’t worry,” Andrea said.

“What are you giving her?” Caroline asked.

“This,” Andrea said, handing them the locket.

“It looks old. Where’d you get it?”

“It was my grandmother’s. It’s very special to me, and I want your mom to have it.”
Cassidy took the locket and flipped it over. “It says ‘All my heart’—what does that mean?”

“My grandmother always used to say ‘I love you with all my heart,’” Andrea said. “Open it.”

Cassidy opened the locket and her eyes widened when she saw a picture of herself and her sister from Christmas and a picture of the babies when they came home from the hospital. She looked up at her sister and they both smiled as she handed the locket back to Andrea.

“Is it okay if I give this to her? If you don’t want me to, I won’t.”

“Andy, you have to. Mom is going to love this,” Caroline said.

Cassidy squealed and jumped up, wrapping her arms around Andrea. “You’re going to be the best stepmom ever!”

Caroline hugged her, too. “When are you going to give it to her?”

Helen appeared in the doorway. “Tonight,” she said. “The three of us are going to play with the babies while Andy and your mom talk privately.”

Caroline frowned.

Cassidy elbowed her. “She doesn’t really mean talk. She means kissing and stuff,” she said.

Andrea rolled her eyes and tucked the locket back into her pocket. “You two are crazy. I’m going to run upstairs and check on the girls. I didn’t turn the monitor on since your mom is up there with them.” They nodded and turned back to the movie they were watching. Once upstairs, Andrea went into the nursery and pulled the giant framed photo out of the closet where it was hiding. Emily had it wrapped in brown paper and secured with raffia, so even Andrea hadn’t seen the final product. She carefully opened the bedroom door and stepped inside.

Miranda quickly turned towards the door, then visibly relaxed when she saw it was Andrea. “Did you miss us already?” she asked quietly.

“Mm-hmm,” Andrea said, nodding. She leaned the frame against the foot of the bed and peered in the bassinet to check on Catherine, who was sleeping soundly. “Let me try putting her down now,” she said, gesturing at Callie who was lying on her back on the bed.

Miranda shrugged, so Andrea carefully picked her up and took her over to the bassinet. She fussed a little bit when Andrea set her down, but after thirty seconds, she was calmly sleeping. “What’s that?” Miranda asked, pointing at the frame.

Andrea picked it up and brought it to Miranda as she took a seat on the edge of the bed. “So, I wanted to get you a push present when the babies were born, but I didn’t have a chance to get it before you went into labor,” she said.

“Darling, I don’t need a push present. That’s just an excuse for middle-class women to demand diamonds from their husbands,” Miranda said.

Andrea shook her head. “Regardless, I wanted to get you something. You have been such a rockstar through all of this. You’re so brave and strong, and I know how fiercely you’ve loved those two girls since the moment you found out they existed. I just wanted to get you something to say thank you for the past eight months.”

Miranda wiped a tear from her eye.
“Open it,” Andrea said.

She untied the raffia and gasped as she tore the paper away. “Oh my god, Andrea,” she said, covering her mouth with her hand. “When was this taken?”

“Our first night at home.” Andrea finally got a chance to see the finished product and she was very pleased with the result.

Miranda set the frame down and crawled over to Andrea, wrapping her arms around her shoulders and kissing her passionately. “It’s absolutely perfect, darling,” Miranda said. “The only thing that could make it more perfect is if you were in it, too.”

“I thought maybe we could put it here in the bedroom.”

“For now,” Miranda said. “But when I go back, this is going on the windowsill in my office. Thank you.”

Andrea leaned in and kissed her again. Miranda pulled away and excused herself to the bathroom. While she was gone, Andrea set the photo on the dresser, leaning against the wall. She reached down into her pocket and clasped the locket in her hand. She didn’t have a speech prepared or anything, and as she sat on the bed, nervously waiting for Miranda to return, she began to think she should have planned something.

She emerged from the bathroom with a sigh as she gently pressed her hand to her lower back.

“Are you okay?” Andrea asked.

“Yes!” Miranda hissed. “I’m fine. Stop fucking asking me that!”

Andrea bit down on her lower lip. Maybe this wasn’t the right time. “I’m sorry, I saw you rub your back and thought maybe it hurt,” she said quietly.

“What? So I’m not allowed to touch any part of my body, lest you think I’m suffering? Jesus. I was pregnant. I gave birth. I’m fine…I’m fine,” she said. “I am…fine.”

Andrea couldn’t read the emotions on Miranda’s face, but it was quite obvious the woman was anything but fine. She turned around and had her fist pressed against her mouth to silence her tears. Andrea slipped the locket back into her pocket and walked over to her, hugging her tightly from behind.

“Andrea…I’m sorry,” Miranda choked out as her sobs overtook her. The young woman pressed a kiss to her shoulder and helped ease her to the ground. Miranda turned in her arms and laid her head against her chest. “I need you…but I don’t want to,” she said.

“Shh, it’s okay,” Andrea said as she held her close. After a few minutes, Miranda sat up and wiped her eyes. “I won’t ask how you’re doing anymore,” Andrea said.

Miranda pursed her lips. “I didn’t mean that. It’s just, you’re always taking care of me. I don’t want to be so needy. I don’t want to need anyone.”

“I get it,” Andrea said. Miranda rolled her eyes. “No, I really do. You’ve always been in control of everything around you, including yourself. This is a big change.” Andrea took her hands. “I’m to blame. I was trying to be helpful and supportive, but I think I went too far and made you feel like some sort of helpless patient. Please forgive me, Miranda. I love you. I just want to make you happy.”
Miranda took Andrea’s face in her hands. “You do make me happy, darling. You do. No one is at fault. We’re both learning this new dynamic, and while I love when you take care of me when I’m laid up in bed, you’re right. I do kind of feel like a helpless patient right now. But do not for one minute question my love for you. This year has been incredible—for so many reasons—but what I remember most is you. There’s only one word for it: bliss. I cannot picture…I mean, what would I do…?” Miranda covered her face with her hands as she got choked up again.

Andrea took the opportunity to reach into her pocket and pull the locket out. She gently tugged Miranda’s hands away from her face. “I have something else for you. I was debating whether this was the right time to give it to you, and, well, here,” she said, holding her hand out.

Miranda’s eyes widened as she picked up the intricate piece of heirloom jewelry. “Where did you get this?” she asked.

“It was my grandmother’s. I want you to have it, and know that I love you with all my heart,” she said, turning the locket over so Miranda could read the inscription. “I’m always going to be here for you. It’s not about need or caregiving, it’s just love, plain and simple. Always…for the rest of my life…if you’ll have me.”

Miranda smiled and looked up at the young woman whose eyes were pooled with tears. “You know the answer to that. Yes, of course,” she said, kissing the younger woman.

“Open it,” Andrea said.

“Oh, I didn’t realize it’s a—locket,” she gasped. “Thank you, darling. It’s beautiful.” She hugged Andrea tightly. “Wait,” she said, sitting up, “you want to get married, right? I’m not crazy?”

Andrea smiled. “You’re not crazy. I would love to marry you, but I know that’s a little more complicated than it should be at present. So, when the time is right, of course.”

She kissed Andrea. “I love you. I want to buy you the biggest, most beautiful ring in the world so everyone knows you’re mine,” she said. “Would you wear it—if I bought you a diamond?”

“I might worry someone would try to steal it on the subway, but yes, I would proudly wear it for you.”

“Then it’s settled,” Miranda said. “This week, we’ll go ring shopping, and no more subway rides for you.”

Andrea laughed and shook her head. “Whatever makes you happy, Miranda.”
The first three months weren’t perfect, but nevertheless, Miranda was happier than she had been in a long time. After the first week or so, her anxiety waned and she thoroughly enjoyed spending her days with her newborns.

In September, when the babies were just eight weeks old, Andrea started her job at the Mirror. She loved the work, but hated leaving Miranda and the babies at home. Cassidy and Caroline returned to school, and resumed spending every other weekend at James’ home. Miranda hired a nanny—Karen, the sister of her midwife Alice—and she helped with the babies’ laundry and helped out during feedings. For the most part, Miranda was able to do it herself, but it was nice to have an extra pair of hands around, especially since Miranda would eventually have to go back to work.

“And Irv was okay with that?”

“Well, he wasn’t thrilled. I told him I was dealing with some postpartum depression and struggling to get back to my pre-pregnancy body. At least that last part is true.”

“Oh stop,” Andrea said, wrapping her arms around her and gently nuzzling her neck. “You are absolutely gorgeous.”

“Moom, Callie needs her diaper changed!” Cassidy called from the living room.

Miranda rolled her eyes. “Remind me why they’re incapable of changing diapers?”

“I believe the word was ’icky,’” Andrea said, taking Catherine from her arms. “Come here, Cate, did you have a good day with Mommy?” she asked. Andrea carried her to the dining room where Cara was setting the table.

“Hi, Andy. Dinner in about twenty minutes—turkey tacos, black beans, and maybe even some margaritas if Miranda wants,” Cara said.
“Sounds delicious. I’ll talk her into one if you promise not to make hers too strong,” she said.

Andrea joined Miranda and Cassidy in the living room as Miranda was finishing changing Callie’s diaper.

“Might as well change Cate’s, too,” Miranda said, reaching out for her little one.

“Are the babies going to eat with us again?” Cassidy asked. “Well, you know, not eat eat, but like, sit in their high chairs again while we eat?”

“I think so, what do you say, Miranda?”

“Yes. Karen and I had them in the chairs this afternoon again and they’re doing really well—reclined, of course. Callie still has a tendency to fall forward, so we’ll just have to keep a close eye on her.”

“Can I put her in her chair now?” Cassidy asked.

“Only if you are going to sit in there with her,” Andrea said.

“Have Cara help you, Bobbsey,” Miranda said. She finished changing Cate’s diaper and Cara came and got her, taking her to the dining room, too.

Andrea whispered something into Miranda’s ear as she led her towards the stairs. “We’ll be down in a minute. Don’t eat without us!” Andrea called. “Caroline? Please come down and sit with your sisters at the table.”

Once upstairs in their bedroom, Miranda unbuttoned her blouse and sat on the edge of the chaise, scooting the small tray table with the breast pump closer. She carefully attached the cups and leaned back against Andrea. The young woman pressed a gentle kiss to her shoulder and slipped her hands around so she was gently massaging her left breast. Miranda reached down and applied compression to her right, sighing softly as she tilted her head back against Andrea’s shoulder.

“Irv wants to publish a photo of the babies,” Miranda said quietly. “Of course, I told him we would have to talk it over.”

“I would prefer we didn’t, but I guess better to be Runway than People or Entertainment Weekly,” Andrea said.

“How would you feel about a family photo?”

“You mean you and all four girls?”

“And you, naturally,” Miranda said. “The magazine is falling short against its fourth quarter projections, and that will mean lowering the rate base for next year. He was hoping for some catchy story to drive sales, and apparently our editorial staff is so uninspired, they’ve decided to sell personal photos of the editor instead.”

“We don’t have to do it,” Andrea said. “Do we?”

“No, it’s a choice. And I think it’s one we have been too reluctant to make. I could write the December/January Holiday Issue editor’s letter and maybe you can help. Rachel could see when Patrick or Annie is free to come here and shoot the photo, but it would have to be no later than November 1.” She gave her breasts a quick squeeze and disengaged the pumps. “Would that work?” she asked as she began to button her blouse back up.
“Ok.” Andrea took the bottles and set them in the small refrigerator they had setup in the bedroom, along with a small microwave. That way, if Andrea needed to help with a feeding in the middle of the night, they didn’t have to leave the room. “What do you think about including everyone? Helen, James, my parents?”

“Let’s ask the girls. Come on,” Miranda said, tugging Andrea towards the dining room. “I believe there is a margarita awaiting me downstairs.”

Miranda thanked Cara for the margarita, and also for making Caroline and Cassidy some frozen lemon-lime slushes. They began eating in the dining room a few months ago when they realized the kitchen just wasn’t big enough anymore. The table comfortably sat four without the leaf, and with the leaf in, there wasn’t room for the highchairs. Now, the girls and Andrea were able to spread their work out on the kitchen table.

“Girls, I wanted to wait until Andrea was home to tell you—”

“You’re having another baby?” Caroline asked.

“Caroline,” Miranda said, glaring. “That is not even funny.” She looked over at Andrea who was staring down at her plate, trying not to laugh. “Cut it out,” she said, softly kicking the brunette under the table.

Andrea took a deep breath and a sip of her margarita. “What your mom was trying to tell you is that she’s not officially going back to work until January 1st,” Andrea said.

“Uh-oh. ‘Officially?’” Cassidy asked.

“Well, I’m certainly not going back to the office until then, but I agreed to help out with Runway’s Holiday issue. Nigel will be very busy with Paris Fashion week, so I will be writing the Editor’s Note, and thanking everyone for making 2007 such an incredible year,” Miranda explained before taking a bite of her taco.

“But you weren’t even working there for half the year,” Caroline said.

“Right, and that’s why everyone thinks it’s important for your mom to show that she’s still here and that Runway is as valuable as ever,” Andrea said.

“I want to include a family picture with this note,” Miranda said. “Are you girls okay with that?”

Andrea was surprised she asked them. She was under the impression that Miranda had already made her decision.

“Sure. Like, are you just going to pick a photo from an album or something?”

“No, Bobbsey, we’ll have a photographer come here to our home and do a very small photo shoot.”

“Will Mr. Patrick come again? I still remember how he told me to jump,” Cassidy said excitedly.

Miranda smiled. “We haven’t decided yet, but I will definitely ask Patrick, and I’m sure if he is available he would love to come back,” she said. “Who do you think should be in the photo?”

Andrea observed this conversation with amazement. This was why Miranda was so good at her job. She could anticipate others’ objections, and knew how to steer the conversation so they thought it was their idea, when in reality, it was her plan all along.
“Well, you, me, Cass, Cate, Callie, and Andy, obviously,” Caroline said.

“And what about Dad and Grandma and Grandpa?” Cassidy said.

“Grandma Helen and Grandpa George or Grandma Mary Ann and Grandpa Rich?” Caroline asked.

“Both, right?”

“Yeah. Oh, and Patricia,” Caroline said.

“Of course. I almost forgot about her, how is she doing?” Miranda asked, casually looking across the table and smiling at Andrea as she traced her toe up the woman’s ankle.

“Good. Dad just took her to the vet and he said she’s healthy as a horse,” Cassidy said, causing both girls to erupt in laughter.

Miranda smiled and sat back. The girls were laughing, Andrea was wiping drool off her chin, and Catherine was smiling as she reached for her own toes. A single tear escaped her eye, and of course, Andrea noticed, softly brushing her shin under the table.

She looked up and met her eyes. Are you okay? they asked.

Miranda smiled and nodded, taking a sip of her margarita. “I have an idea,” she announced. “For this photo, how about everyone picks out their own outfit? Girls, you can decide what Cate and Callie will wear.”

Everyone stopped eating and stared at Miranda.

“Are you feeling okay, Mom?”

“Did I hear you right?”

“You’re kidding.”

Miranda chuckled and shook her head. “We’ve taken so many photos where everyone dresses in the same cream sweaters and we’re all posed and perfect. That’s too…I don’t know, fake. Anyone can fake a photo, but you all are perfect just the way you are. I want everyone to see that. I want them to see what makes me so happy each and every day.”

“So does this mean Andy can wear that Northwestern hoodie?” Caroline asked with a snicker.

Miranda rolled her eyes. “I would hope she would select something more appropriate for publication, but if she so chooses, yes, she may wear it,” she said.

“As much as I like my sweatshirt, I wouldn’t really want to be seen outside the house in it. There’s mascara stains on the sleeve, and now spit up stains on the shoulder,” Andrea said. “I only wear that when we go to bed,” she added with a wink.

“Oh my god, you guys—gross!” Caroline said.

Miranda bit her lip. “Girls, if you remember, there are two four-month-olds that sleep between us in bed, so I don’t know what you’re implying is so gross.”

Caroline made a face and continued eating her taco.

After dinner, Caroline went to do her homework while Cassidy went to sit with Andrea. Miranda
was upstairs getting the bath ready for Cate and Callie.

“What’s up, Cass?” she asked.

“Um, I just want to say thank you,” she said, climbing up into Andrea’s lap.

“For what, sweetie?”

“Making Mom happy.”

“Oh, Cass, you and your sister make your mom very happy, too. It’s not me,” Andrea said, hugging her gently.

“No. I mean, I know we make her happy and all, but since you’ve been here, she’s been really happy. Like, really-extra-super happy.”

“Sweetie, Cate and Callie make your mom happy, too.”

“No, Andy, you don’t get it. You didn’t see her before—with Stephen. She hardly smiled, she was always reading something, she never laughed. We had dinner together—all of us—maybe once a month. Maybe.”

Andrea opened her mouth once again to protest, but Cassidy quickly continued. “See, just this. Mom usually hates when people talk so much and keep disagreeing. But when you do it, she gets all smiley and lets it go. Andy, when we were in Mexico for Christmas, I heard Mom call you and say she missed you.”

“I thought you two were sleeping?”

“Caro was. I was watching Mom on the balcony. Her whole face looked happy when she was talking to you. And that was before the babies.”

Andrea shrugged. “I suppose you’re right, then. Your mom makes me happy, too. You all do.”

Cassidy hugged her tightly and stayed like that for a few minutes. “Andy, if you and mom fight, and you move out, can we come spend weekends with you like we do with dad?”

Andrea leaned back and gently tilted the young girl’s chin upwards so she could look in her eye. “Darling, I’m never moving out.”

She shrugged. “Stephen said that, too, when we first met him.”

Andrea looked up and Caroline was leaning against the doorway. “Come here,” she said, patting the couch next to her. She wrapped her arms around both girls. “Listen, your mom and I love each other very much and we’re going to spend the rest of our lives together. That doesn’t mean we will never fight—that’s natural, people are going to disagree at some point or another. I will never walk away from you. And if—if, if, if—your mother decides she no longer wants me around, she better be prepared because I will put up one heck of a fight for you four girls.”

“Do you mean it?”

“I absolutely do,” Andrea said. “You’re my family now. I’m going to watch you graduate from college, find your first apartment, get married, have your own children, and even your children’s children if I’m lucky.” She leaned over and kissed each of their foreheads. “Let’s never have this conversation again, okay? I love you, and I’m not going anywhere.”
Both girls nodded and hugged Andrea tightly. Just then, Miranda came downstairs to get the babies for their bath, and paused when she saw Andrea with tears in her eyes, holding her daughters. “What’s wrong?” she asked.

“Nothing,” the girls said in unison, stepping away from the couch. “Andy’s just going to help me with English after the babies have their bath.”

Miranda raised her eyebrow as she watched them head back into the kitchen. “What was all that?” she quietly asked.

“I’ll tell you upstairs,” Andrea said. She turned to the bouncers. “Are you two love bugs ready for a bath?” She unfastened Callie and picked her up as Miranda did the same with Catherine.

Upstairs, Andrea gave Miranda the gist of the conversation, not telling her everything Cassidy said about Stephen and how much happier Miranda was now. Miranda was upset that the girls were even thinking about divorce—as though that’s what they expected of people. But on some level, she couldn’t blame them. Wasn’t that what she expected of people, too? That they would grow tired of her and eventually leave? Sure, Andrea had told her a million times that she was never leaving, but Miranda knew there was always a possibility.

“Hey,” Andrea said, bringing her back to the present. “You okay?”

Miranda nodded and resumed bathing Cate while Andrea held onto her. “It’s just…I feel quite guilty that the girls are already so disillusioned. They’re only ten years old.”

Andrea lifted Cate from the tub and wrapped her in a towel. “I think all his are like that now. It’s a different world.” She softly laid Cate on the bed and applied some baby lotion before putting on her diaper and pajamas. “Okay, back into the bassinet until your sister’s finished with her bath,” Andrea said, kissing Cate softly on the forehead.

Miranda had already had the bathtub filled with fresh water for Callie. “You’re so good with them,” she said, “Cass and Care, I mean. They adore you.”

“You’ve been a remarkable mother, Miranda. Don’t let anything tell you otherwise. Plenty of women in your position lose sight of their families because they’re so work-obsessed. Sure, people think that’s who you are—because let’s face it, you fit the criteria—but you’re not, and you haven’t been for at least the past ten and a half years, am I right?”

Miranda lifted Callie from the tub and wrapped her in a towel, kissing her softly on the lips as she carried her to the bed. “You’re right that I’ve changed since the girls were born, but I’m hardly a remarkable mother,” she said. She applied some extra lotion to a dry patch of skin on Callie’s upper arm before slipping her into her pajamas. She set Callie back in her bassinet, then quickly went to change into her own pajamas and clean up from the bath.

Andrea, too, changed into her cotton nightshirt and pulled the pillows from the bed, carefully smoothing out the fitted sheet and folding back the quilt. Miranda climbed into bed and set one pillow on each side of her. Andrea brought the babies over and handed her one at a time so she could get them situated, then she turned out the light and climbed into bed while Miranda began nursing.

“Miranda, you—”

“Stop. I don’t…I just don’t want to talk about this now,” Miranda said.

Andrea crawled closer and kissed Miranda gently. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to upset you.”
“It’s okay. Would you mind running up to check on Caroline and Cassidy? I didn’t get to tell them
goodnight.”

“Of course,” Andrea said, climbing out of bed, careful not to disturb the babies. Two minutes later,
 she quietly led Caroline and Cassidy into the bedroom to tell their mother and sisters goodnight.
She followed them back upstairs and promised them she’d make waffles for breakfast in the
morning, reminding them that they could sleep in if they wanted because it was Saturday.

When she returned to the bedroom, Miranda was carefully laying Callie down on the bed. Without
saying a word, Andrea joined her family in bed.

“Andrea, can you come here for a minute?” Miranda called from the bedroom. Everyone was
already downstairs milling about, and the babies were finally awake.

“Patrick is ready for us,” Andrea said as she climbed the steps. “What’s going on?” she asked as
she entered the bedroom. Clothes were strewn everywhere and Miranda was standing in front of
her try-fold mirror in a lace push-up bra and underwear, holding a corset in her hand. “That is
incredibly sexy, Miranda, but I hope you’re going to put something over that for the photo,”
Andrea said.

“Help me get this on,” she said, handing the corset to Andrea.

“Is this one of those weight-loss corsets? You don’t need this.”

Miranda ripped it out of Andrea’s hands. “Yes I do. Just—forget it. Wait for me downstairs.”

“No, Miranda, stop. Tell me what’s going on,” Andrea said as calmly as she could. “I want to help
you.”

Miranda sat on the edge of the bed and hung her head. “I’m fat, Andrea. I’m already wearing pants
two sizes larger than I used to, and my gut is just hanging out there,” she said. “Nothing looks good
on me. Maybe we can just photoshop my picture in.”

Andrea smiled and took Miranda’s hand. “Honey, you are beautiful. You’ve taught me that you
don’t need to be a size zero to be sexy. I love your body even more now because it nurtured and
birthed our beautiful daughters. No one’s going to judge you, you just had a baby.”

“Ha! Four and a half months ago I had a baby.”

Andrea took a deep breath. “Look, wasn’t it you who wanted everyone to select their own outfit?
You wanted this to look real, not fake. When you walk downstairs and see our family, you won’t
care what you’re wearing, I promise you. James was holding Catherine while my mother was
wiping her lipstick off her cheek. Cassidy was showing George photos on the iPad, Helen was
playing peek-a-boo with Callie, and my dad was talking with Caroline about the Yankees and Reds
game next week. Miranda, it’s our family photo. Your eyes will radiate with love and happiness.
For once in your life, don’t over think the outfit.”

Miranda gently dabbed at her eye. “Don’t make me cry or I’ll have to redo my makeup,” she said.
“I’ll wear the blouse and periwinkle cardigan with the black ankle-length pants. But please, I
would feel more comfortable if I had this on.”

Andrea nodded and helped Miranda into the corset. Then, Miranda quickly dressed and slipped on
a pair of plain black Prada pumps and headed downstairs to join the others.
“I can’t believe you said we should photoshop you into this picture,” Andrea said with a chuckle.

Miranda smiled and took Catherine from James’ arms. “Darling, grab Callie,” she said.

“Miranda, we have the lighting arranged in the living room, the dining room, and the kitchen. I’m thinking I’ll just snap a bunch of shots of you all in action for the next ten minutes, then we can review and see if anything stands out to us, will that work?” Patrick asked.

“That’s fine. I trust you,” she said.

They milled around for the next few minutes, and the house was filled with laughter as the quiet snapping of the camera was heard.

“Andy, come see this,” Patrick said, calling the brunette over. He showed her a few shots of Miranda and Catherine he just snapped.

“Patrick, I think we’re definitely going to want an album of all of these shots. Think you can have that in time for Christmas?” Andrea asked.

“You bet. Why don’t you try and get everyone to gather around the couch?”

Andrea nodded and once everyone was in the general vicinity, pieces just fell into place. Patricia at Miranda’s feet. Helen standing behind her with her hand on her shoulder. Cassidy tugging James back towards the group. Andrea sitting next to Miranda, making faces at Caroline. Andrea’s mother wiping drool from Callie’s chin. George with his arm around Helen. Andrea’s father picking Cassidy up.

After a few snaps, Patrick clapped his hands together, quieting everyone down. “Let’s try a few shots with everyone looking at the camera,” he said. “Then, I want you to play musical chairs and rearrange yourselves and pass the babies around. But Miranda, I want you standing behind the couch.”

He took a few more shots, then gestured for everyone to get up. Helen eagerly took the baby from Andrea’s arms, and Andrea’s father reached for Catherine. Caroline sat on the arm of the couch, and James sat next to his mother. Andrea ended up next to Miranda, both with their hands on the back of the couch.

Andrea’s pinky finger grazed Miranda’s and their eyes met. Catherine started to fuss, so Richard handed her up and over to Miranda, where she instantly calmed. Miranda held her hand and kissed her nose several times, making her smile happily.

Before they knew it, Patrick explained that they were finished and called Miranda over to review the shots.

“Oh my god,” she gasped, looking at the screen. “It’s chaos.”

Patrick bit his lip, waiting for Miranda to tell him to redo everything.

“And it’s absolutely perfect. Can you get me the proofs by the end of the day Monday? I don’t expect there will be much retouching,” she said.

He heaved a sigh of relief. “Miranda, darling, don’t scare me like that. I’ll have them sent over first thing Monday morning.”

Miranda said goodbye to Patrick and his assistants, who had already taken down the lighting. She
returned to the living room where her family was busy with their own conversations. “Who’s ready for lunch?” she asked. “Ladies, if you’ll help me in the kitchen. Boys, can you manage to take the girls upstairs and change two diapers?”

“Of course,” Richard said, cuddling his granddaughter. “Jim, do you have the other one?”

“Sure do,” James said.

“I’ll lead the way,” George said, marching up the staircase.

Helen watched them and shook her head. “You made a good choice, Miranda,” she said quietly. Andrea and her mother were already in the kitchen, taking the salads out of the refrigerator while Cassidy and Caroline set the table. “Andrea fits you much better than James, though I’m awfully grateful that he brought us together.”

Miranda smiled. It was such an odd thing to say, she thought, but it was true. “I’m just thankful for such an incredible family,” she said.

The photos turned out perfect. Instead of choosing one where everyone was smiling at the camera, she chose one of the last photos Patrick snapped. Catherine was in her arms and she was kissing her nose. She and Andrea spent the following week finishing the accompanying Editor’s Note, and on the eve of Thanksgiving, the Holiday issue went to print. There was no turning back.

Miranda enjoyed a quiet Thanksgiving at the townhouse with her immediate family. Since James’ parents and Andrea’s parents were just in town the week prior, it didn’t make sense to travel again so soon. They had tentative plans to visit Boston and Cincinnati over the Christmas holiday.

“I was going to say this at dinner, but I was afraid I wouldn’t make it through,” Miranda said as she slipped out of her clothes and headed for the shower. The babies were sleeping in their bassinets. James came to pick up Caroline and Cassidy for the weekend after they had dinner. They were alone in the house.

“What were you going to say?” Andrea asked.

“That I’m thankful for you,” Miranda said, tears threatening to fall.

Andrea hugged her tightly. “You make me feel so special, so loved, Miranda. Some days I wake up and can’t believe that you chose me.”

“Andrea, make love to me,” she whispered.

The young woman’s eyes darted towards the door, the only thing separating them from their sleeping children.

“They’ll be fine for at least another hour,” Miranda said.

Andrea finished taking her clothes off, then put on a robe and handed the other to Miranda. “Come with me,” she said, taking her hand.

Miranda allowed herself to be led out of the bathroom, out of the bedroom, and downstairs into the dining room. “Where are we going?” she finally asked.

Andrea dimmed the lights and pulled the curtains shut. “Indulge me in this one fantasy, Miranda,” she whispered. The older woman nodded, and Andrea gently lifted her up so she was sitting on the edge of the dining room table. “I’ve been wanting to make love here in the dining room for
months, but we were never alone,” she whispered as she began to trail kisses along Miranda’s jaw. She could already smell Miranda’s arousal and knew it wouldn’t take much tonight, so she savored what she could.

Andrea gently pushed Miranda’s robe off her shoulder, letting it fall back, exposing her breasts. She trailed her hands along Miranda’s ribcage, causing the woman to arch her back and let out a moan. Andrea untied the sash and sat in the chair at the head of the table.

Miranda spread her legs, resting her feet on the chair’s arm rests. Andrea continued moving her hands over the woman’s body, pausing only to lick the trail of milk that was seeping from Miranda’s right breast.

Andrea raked her tongue downward along her stomach as she stilled Miranda’s hips, holding them in place. She gently licked the woman’s folds, causing her to fall backwards against the table. “Miranda, sit up,” she said. “I want you to watch me.”

She pushed herself up onto her elbows and gazed down her body, locking eyes with the brunette between her legs. “I love you,” she said, licking her folds again. “And I’m thankful for you,” she said, sucking her clit out of its hood. As Miranda writhed and moaned on the table, Andrea slipped two fingers inside, curling them upwards.

“Oh god, Andrea!” Miranda screamed. She reached her hands out to the sides, gripping the edges of the table. “Oh, please…please, please, please,” she moaned.

“Please what, darling?”

“Ohhh…harder, Andy! Fuck! Uh—uh—uh—ash!” she cried out as her muscles clenched around Andrea’s fingers. She didn’t want to say anything, but it certainly seemed like all those exercises to strengthen her pelvic floor had paid off.

Without moving her hand, Andrea carefully climbed up onto the table. Miranda’s breasts were squirting milk as the aftershocks rolled through her body. Once she seemed to settle, Andrea slipped her fingers from her warm center and slowly licked them, savoring Miranda’s taste.

Miranda slowly opened her eyes and gazed glassy-eyed at Andrea. “I’ve never—I mean—” she panted.

Andrea gently kissed her on the lips as she lowered her body to rest against Miranda’s. “I guess that was the last five weeks’ worth of arousal building,” she said.

“Has it been that long?” Miranda asked, wrapping her arms around Andrea.

“Mm-hmm, it was the week before Halloween, remember? The girls went to a costume party and slept over.”

“You’re right,” she said. “I’m sorry, it won’t be that long until our next time,” Miranda said.

“You know that doesn’t matter to me, Miranda. I don’t need to orgasm to feel your love.”

Miranda smiled and kissed her on the cheek. “Do you hear what I hear?” Andrea nodded and turned to her side, slowly crawling off the table. “Next time, you’re my dessert,” Miranda said, grinning as she slipped her robe back on.

“Sounds like they’re both awake,” Andrea said.
“Of course,” she said, quickly running up the stairs.

“Why don’t you feed Callie, and I’ll bring Catherine into the bathroom while I take a quick shower?” Andrea offered. “Then, once Callie’s finished nursing, you can shower and we’ll all be waiting for you in bed.”

Miranda smiled. “Catherine does like to fall asleep while she’s nursing,” she said, chuckling. “Thank you.”

“Are you sure you won’t need me tonight, Miranda?” Cara asked. “With Karen gone and Andrea at work—”

“Thank you, but I will be fine. Andrea is meeting us tonight. I’m going to pack all the girls into the car in a few minutes,” Miranda said. “Remember, I don’t want to see you until Monday. Rest up, you’ll need it.”

This weekend was Miranda’s last weekend on maternity leave. She was planning to surprise Andrea with dinner tonight and a special gift to mark their anniversary. They never discussed when they would actually celebrate, but she was sure Andrea shared the same fond memories of their first kiss.

Not long after Cara left, Emily and Serena showed up. “Thank you so much for doing this,” Miranda said, hugging each of them.

“Of course, that’s what we’re here for,” Emily said.

“You’re looking great, Miranda. Is it true you’ll be back on Monday?” Serena asked. It had been months since she saw the editor.

Miranda’s lip curled up in a grin as she silently answered the question. “But I won’t be in for the full day. It’s my first real day away from my babies, and, well, you know…” she said. “Anyway, there are ingredients in the refrigerator for homemade pizzas, and there is ice cream in the freezer. I’m not sure if they’ll want to stay up until midnight or not—they’ll probably just fall asleep on the couch and ask you to wake them a few minutes before. There’s enough bottles in the fridge to last you through tomorrow, and I’ll quick feed them before I leave. If for some reason, you run out, there is additional stored in the freezer in the garage.”

“That’s fine. We’ll figure it out. Anything special to get the girls to sleep?” Emily asked.

“Well, it’s up to you. We were going to have them start sleeping in their own cribs in the nursery, but I don’t want them to keep you up all night. If you can try getting them used to the cribs, that would be wonderful, but don’t worry too much about it,” Miranda said.

“So, they’ll sleep in the bassinets, then?”

“No. They sleep in bed with us. They’re very good, and you can feed them right there without getting up. Of course, each of you has to sleep on the outside, so they don’t roll out of bed.”

Emily’s eyes widened. “Y-your bed?”

“Don’t worry. The sheets are clean,” Miranda said, rolling her eyes. “Girls, why don’t you come down and say hello to Emily and Serena?” she called up the stairs. “I’m going to go wake the girls
up and feed them once more before I leave. Make yourselves at home.”

A few hours later, Miranda was gazing out the window at the preparations in Times Square below. This year, she had the penthouse at the Renaissance Marriott, a stunning suite with a 270-degree view of the city. She was dressed and waiting, sitting on the edge of the couch, sipping a glass of wine. Their table at the restaurant in the hotel was reserved for the entire night, but she was hoping Andrea didn’t get held up at work.

Her phone’s buzz jolted her from her thoughts. Roy just picked me up—he won’t tell me where he’s taking me. ???

Miranda smiled and replied: Close your eyes and relax for a little while. I will see you soon, darling. xx

Finishing her glass of wine, she smoothed out her dress and headed down to the restaurant where the maitre’d led her to the isolated booth in the corner. She sent Emily a quick text checking on the four girls, and once she confirmed everyone was doing fine, she ordered a bottle of Veuve for the table. She reached into her bag and pulled out a flat jewelry box. Taking a deep breath, she set it on the table and anxiously awaited Andrea’s arrival.

Not long afterwards, the maitre’d led Andrea to her table. She quickly took a seat next to Miranda and kissed her softly on the cheek.

After the Holiday issue of Runway, the press went into a frenzy over the couple’s relationship. But now, things died down a little and they were comfortable leaving the house. Still, Andrea saved her kisses for their private moments.

“Happy Anniversary, darling,” Miranda said as she handed her a glass of champagne.

She smiled brightly as she gently clinked their glasses. “Where are the girls?” she asked, sipping on the champagne.

“We have babysitters tonight,” Miranda said, grinning.

“Em and Serena?”

Miranda nodded.

“All night?”

Miranda nodded again. “We have the penthouse suite here tonight.”

Andrea threw her arms around Miranda’s neck and hugged her, pressing kisses along her neck and collarbone. “Can we skip dinner?” she whispered.

Miranda gently pushed her away. “It’s still early. We have all night, my darling. Plus, I’ve already ordered for us.”

Andrea scrunched her nose up and made a face.

“They don’t have chicken fingers, Andrea, but I think I managed to order something you’ll enjoy,” she said, gesturing at the server carrying their plates.

He placed Miranda’s steak and steamed asparagus down before her, then placed a bowl of penne pasta with a cream sauce in front of Andrea. She looked down at the plate. “What is it?” she asked.
“Taste it,” Miranda said, poking a few noodles with her fork and holding it up to Andrea’s mouth.

Andrea smiled as she allowed the other woman to feed her, and once she realized what she was eating, she was torn between wanting to devour the woman next to her and wanting to devour her plate. “Mac and cheese,” she said, matter-of-factly.

“As I said, they couldn’t do chicken fingers,” Miranda said with a smirk.

They ate in companionable silence, stealing glances here and there, offering each other bites of their food. As it turns out, Miranda likes macaroni and cheese, too. Once the server took their plates, Miranda asked that he have their dessert sent up to the room.

“Before we go upstairs,” she said quietly. “I want to give you this.” She gently pushed the red box towards the young woman.

Andrea set down her champagne flute and looked up. Miranda nodded softly, and Andrea opened the box.

“Oh my god!” she exclaimed, clasping her hand over her mouth as she realized she probably spoke a bit too loudly for the intimate restaurant. “Miranda—this—it’s—oh my god. It’s gorgeous.”

Miranda took the necklace out of the box as Andrea swept her hair up and out of the way. After fastening it around her neck, she gently held her hand there, admiring its beauty. “It’s my gift to you—one of many to come,” Miranda said.

“But—this is too much. I mean,” Andrea stammered. “I don’t want to know what something like this would cost. It looks vintage.”

“I acquired it through a business deal and the previous owner suggested it would look stunning on you. I don’t often agree with her, but she was right.”

“In what kind of business deal is a diamond necklace acceptable currency? Who did it belong to?” she asked.

“I wasn’t going to tell you, but I suppose you’ll keep nagging me until I do,” Miranda said with a sigh. “In July, Adam Moss sent a package for me to Runway. What’s-her-name knew better than to bother me with it. About a month ago, our Emily got curious and opened it—it was a gift from Adam Moss and Daniel Kaizer. The card simply read ‘Congratulations,’ and inside the box were eight caftans. They were very high-quality and looked to be of Indian silk. The gesture was thoughtful, but I had no use for them. They were large enough to cover a horse.”

“So you traded them. With whom?”

Miranda smiled. “My dear old friend Elizabeth. I hadn’t spoken to her in years, but when I contacted her, she was very anxious for the garments. I didn’t ask for anything in return, but she admitted that she had seen the tabloids and thought you looked like quite a lovely young woman. She teased me about dating a child, and I tried to explain that you were hardly a child, but, she has this way of not listening to what others have to say. She again thanked me for sending the caftans, and that was the end of it. Two weeks later, this arrived. With a note.”

“What did it say?” Andrea asked.

Miranda gently lifted the crushed velvet lining of the box and pulled out a notecard, sliding it across the table to Andrea.
Andrea gasped as she read it: *This will be perfect for her. Big girls need big diamonds. xx, Elizabeth.* “Miranda, this is—this stationery—Elizabeth Taylor?”

“She apparently didn’t need it anymore,” Miranda said with a shrug as she tried to disguise her smile.

“I can’t accept—“

“It’s yours. She won’t take it back,” Miranda said. “It would be rude to even think such things.”

“Where will I ever wear it? I’m afraid I’ll lose it, or it will get stolen.”

“Darling, you definitely can’t wear this on the subway,” she said, softly cupping her cheek. “But you can wear it when you’re with me. Laying in bed on a Sunday morning or maybe even at the Met Gala this spring. Do you like it?”

“Of course. It’s gorgeous. Oh my god, I never even said thank you,” she said as tears started to stream down her face. “Thank you,” she said, leaning closer and kissing Miranda.

“Let’s head upstairs,” she whispered.

Once they were in the elevator, Andrea turned to her. “Will you tell me what it’s worth?”

Miranda’s eyebrow quirked up. “You know, there’s a reason people remove price tags before giving gifts.”

“Oh, and you’re now considering yourself amongst ‘people?’”

Miranda smiled. “It’s worth more than your handbag, but less than your engagement ring,” she said as she wrapped her arms around the young woman. “If it makes you feel any better,” Miranda said, “think of it as payment for everything you’ve done this past year.”

“What? You don’t—“

“It’s not. I mean, I’m not trying to offer compensation, but you really did do so much for me and for my daughters. You’ve given me the greatest gifts—more than I could ever imagine.”

“But Miranda, you already got me this enormous ring,” she said, flashing her ring finger. “Remember?”

“I know,” she said. “I can’t help it if I just enjoy buying you gifts. Can we please stop talking about money and just enjoy our evening? It would be such a shame to waste all of this time alone arguing.”

“Agreed. I love you so much,” Andrea said, taking Miranda’s hand and following her to the bedroom.

Saturday afternoon, they returned to the townhouse. Emily and Serena reassured them that the babies were perfect angels, and hurried on their way. Miranda curled up on the couch with her babies in her arms, hugging and kissing them. Andrea wrapped her arms around Cassidy and Caroline and asked what they did with Em and Serena.

“We got a new TV!” Cassidy said excitedly.

“You did?” Andrea asked.
“Yeah, well, it’s the one Mom bought for her office and never used. Come on, let’s show you!” she said, taking Andrea’s hand and dragging her up the stairs.

Andrea looked over at Miranda for some sort of confirmation, but the older woman could only shrug as she was nursing the babies. She, clearly, had no idea what Cassidy was talking about, either.

“Here,” Cass said, tugging Andrea into the master bedroom. “It’s the awesomest TV ever.”

“Cass, shut up. ‘Awesomest’ isn’t a word!” Caroline said, punching her in the ribs.

“Hey you two,” Andrea said. “None of that. What is so awesome about this TV?”

“So, you can watch regular channels or DVDs or Netflix or whatever. But then, when you press this button,” she said, demonstrating, “and it’s also the baby monitor.”

“But, sweetie, we already have the monitors.”

Caroline rolled her eyes. “Andy, we moved the monitors to the cribs in the nursery and connected the feed to this TV. You can still watch it on your iPad, or you can watch it on here. Like, when you and mom are sleeping, you know?”

Andrea’s eyes widened as she realized what they were saying. They had been talking about moving the babies to the nursery when Miranda went back to work, and this would make it so much easier. “Oh my gosh, girls, this really is the awesomest TV ever! Whose idea was it?”

“Well, Serena’s the one who set it up—“

“And Emily knew about the extra TV in Mom’s study. We all kind of helped,” Caroline said.

Andrea hugged them again and kissed them each on the forehead. “Your mom will be really happy when she sees this. I think it will make her less stressed about going back to work,” she said.

“Doesn’t she want to go back?”

“I think she’s sad to be leaving the babies at home. And she’s sad because she knows she won’t be there when you leave for school or when you come home—not in the way she has been for the past six months or so. But I also think she kind of misses work. You know she’s really good at her job, and she’s super smart, and I think it’s starting to drive her crazy—talking to two six-month-olds all day,” Andrea said with a chuckle. “But we need to be really nice to her next week, okay? It’s going to be hard on her.”

“What’s going to be hard on me?” Miranda asked, carrying both girls up the stairs.

“Umm…” Andrea stammered.

“Your first day back to work. Everything is probably a mess and you’re going to be super busy fixing everything Uncle Nigel did,” Caroline said.

Andrea smiled and sighed in relief. Who knew Caroline could cover for her so well?

“Oh, well, then I will just have to fire everyone and hire an entirely new staff,” Miranda said with a shrug. “Maybe even demand a new office, no?”

The girls giggled as Miranda handed Callie over to Andrea. “I think they’re ready for a nap. Emily and Serena wore them out. Cate was falling asleep as I was feeding her,” Miranda said. “Think we
can start letting them sleep in their cribs?”

“Emily let Callie take a nap in the crib this morning and she was fine,” Cassidy said. “Cate didn’t want to.”

“Well, she’s really tired now, so maybe she’ll be more agreeable,” Miranda said gently setting her down.

Andrea sat in the rocker with Callie, who was still wide awake. “Girls, show your mom the new monitor setup,” she said quietly. After a few minutes of watching the little girl’s eyelids droop, she laid Callie in the crib adjacent to her sister, then went to join the other Priestly women.

“Look, you can see them clear as day,” Miranda said, pointing at the screen. “I am going to miss having them in bed with us…just a little,” she said.

“But now there will be room for me and Care if we have a bad dream or aren’t feeling good, right? Andy won’t have to come upstairs and sleep with us,” Cassidy said.

Miranda kneeled and wrapped her arms around her daughter. “Yes, baby, that’s right. And we can all take naps together on lazy afternoons, too,” she said. “What do you think you want for dinner?” she asked.

“I’m not hungry yet,” Caroline said.

“Let’s try to think ahead,” Andrea said. “What did Em and Serena make for you?”

“Emily made this spinach salad with chicken and strawberries and nuts last night. Then we had some pizza rolls while we watched a movie,” Caroline said.

“And Serena made us some steel-cut oatmeal with tons of berries. Then we had pita pockets with hummus and veggies for lunch before you got home,” Cassidy said.

“Well that sounds very healthy,” Miranda said, looking over at Andrea. “What do you say we order pizza later tonight?”

Both girls squealed as they hugged Miranda. They were only allowed to order pizza on rare occasions. Generally, they made their own pizzas with Cara’s homemade whole wheat dough. This was certainly a treat.

“Tell me, did Emily eat while she was here?” Miranda asked, pulling away a bit.

Cassidy snickered. “We made her taste a pizza roll. She said it was ‘scrummy,’” she said, inflecting Emily’s accent.

“Darling, that means it was good,” Miranda said.

“We know—she had to explain it after we all gave her a funny look,” Cassidy said.

“Well, I’m glad she had something to eat,” Miranda said.

Andrea reached up and covered her mouth as a yawn took over.

“Andy, didn’t you sleep okay at the hotel last night?” Cassidy asked.

“Well,” she said, trying to hide her blush, “your Mom and I stayed up pretty late watching all the New Year’s festivities, so we didn’t get to bed until really late.”
“And I’m used to waking up to feed the babies, so we were up pretty early, too,” Miranda added. “Hey,” she said, sitting back on her heels. “What do you say we all take a nap while the babies are sleeping?”

Again, Miranda’s suggestion was met with twin squeals. The girls quickly took her hands and led her to the bed, climbing in on either side of her. Andrea followed suit, taking her usual spot on the left side of the bed, with Cassidy between her and Miranda, Caroline on the opposite side.

“Hey! Not fair,” Caroline said, climbing over so she could squeeze between Andrea and her sister.

“Is everyone comfortable?” Miranda asked as she draped her arm over her daughter.

“Yep,” Caroline replied. She curled up on her side and tugged Andrea’s arm around her.

Miranda smiled and reached for Andrea’s hand, gently interlacing their fingers. At times like this, she had no intention of ever returning to Runway.

The rest of their evening was enjoyable, but considerably subdued. The babies fell into a crying fit when they woke from their nap in a strange room, and it took nearly two hours to calm them down. Miranda quietly fed Catherine in the rocking chair, and then Cassidy and Caroline played with her downstairs. But Callie, on the other hand, was quite resistant. When she kept turning her head and pushing away from Miranda’s breast, she simply held her and rocked her for a while, hoping she would calm down. Again, she offered her breast, but this time after a few seconds of sucking, she bit down unexpectedly, causing Miranda to yelp.

Andrea warmed a bottle and handed it to Miranda, but it seemed like Callie didn’t want that, either. If her arms reaching up were any indication, she didn’t want her mother—she wanted Andrea.

Miranda stood from the chair and switched places with Andrea. It seemed like the instant Callie was in her arms, she calmed. And she was eager to take her bottle, too. Andrea could see the conflicting emotions in Miranda’s eyes, and she wanted nothing more than to go to her and reassure her; however, Miranda waved her off and ran out of the room. Hearing the bedroom door slam shut, Andrea gently bent down and kissed Callie on the forehead, quietly whispering how she needed to be nicer to her mommy.

Once the babies were fed and their diapers were changed, the six of them gathered around the kitchen table for a riveting game of UNO, which Serena had apparently introduced them to. When it came time to put the girls down for the night, the six of them gathered in the master bathroom for what was soon becoming their nighttime ritual: bath, clean onesies, bedtime story, and nursing. Except tonight, Miranda made no attempt to feed Callie, instead gesturing for Andrea to give her a bottle.

After laying the sleeping babies in their cribs, the four of them went back downstairs for a rematch at UNO, then Miranda sent the girls up to bed. She and Andrea followed, silently tidying up their bathroom, then taking turns showering and slipping into pajamas.

When Andrea stepped out of the shower, Miranda wasn’t in the bedroom. A quick glance to the baby monitor-TV showed silvery-white hair shining next to Callie’s crib. Andrea grabbed their pillows and blanket from the bed and pulled their duvet from the closet. Quietly, she stepped into the nursery and shut the door behind her. She tossed the linens on the floor, and Miranda quickly turned around with a curious expression.

“We’ll sleep in here tonight,” Andrea said. “It’ll probably be good for them to hear the familiar murmur of our voices, you know?”
Miranda nodded and crawled over to the other side of the room, pushing the ottoman out of the way so they could spread the duvet. Once their makeshift bed was set, Miranda laid down on her side, facing the cribs. Andrea fell into place behind her, softly kissing the older woman’s temple as she snuggled and wrapped her arms around her.

A few minutes of laying in silence and Andrea knew something wasn’t right. Miranda’s breathing was irregular, and she stiffened under her touch.

“I think Callie is teething,” Andrea said quietly. She wanted to reassure Miranda without making it so obvious. “When I gave her a bottle tonight, she was very content just chewing on it, and she was even biting on the washcloth during her bath. The pediatrician did say we could expect teeth as soon as four months—and it’s been six—so, we should probably start using all those teething rings and toys in the closet.” She heard a sniffle, but didn’t say anything.

Miranda gently turned in Andrea’s arms. “She was nibbling on my finger a little bit the other day, too. When the girls were babies, I used to put damp washcloths in the freezer and let them gnaw on those,” she said.

“We could also try giving her some really cold water in a bottle, not really to drink, but because it will make the nipple cold.”

“Have you seen those new mesh feeders?” Miranda asked. “They look like pacifiers, but you can put things like banana or apples in there and let them chew on it. I suppose we should start introducing them to some foods, anyway,” she said.

“True. I’m going to go get a bottle with ice water and keep it in this mini-fridge,” Andrea said. “Just in case Callie wakes up really upset. Tomorrow, in the daylight, we can check out her gums and maybe give her some Tylenol to help.”

As Andrea was standing up, Miranda grasped her wrist firmly. “Thank you,” she said. When Andrea didn’t respond, she continued, “you know what for.”

Andrea simply smiled and squeezed her hand before slipping out of the room and down to the kitchen.

Monday morning, Miranda’s alarm sounded at 4:51 A.M. She awoke with a jolt and took a few deep breaths before tapping the “snooze” button. Andrea grumbled and shifted somewhere on the other side of the bed. Less than an hour ago, she was crawling into bed after feeding Catherine.

“I’m not going to last all day,” she said quietly.

Andrea pushed aside the comforter and moved closer to the woman. “Good morning,” she said, kissing her softly.

“I’m sorry, darling, yes, good morning. I think I’m only going to stay in the office for a half day.”

“Let Rachel know now so she can start rearranging your schedule,” Andrea said. “Trust me, a little kindness here and there will go a long way.”

She smiled back at the young woman. “I will tell her as soon as I get out of bed. Is the breast pump—”

“—already at your office, along with any supplies you may need, and a small Louis Vuitton keepall with a cooler inside for the milk.”
“And my laptop—“

“—already packed in your Kors tote, waiting in the foyer for Roy to pick it up.”

“I’ll need to leave a list of emergency contacts for Karen—“

“—one in every room of the house.”

“And Caroline and Cassidy have that science project—“

“—the volcano? It’s in the trunk of James’ car. He’ll deliver it when he takes them to school.”

Miranda shook her head. She had no idea when the young woman had time to take care of all this considering she spent the past few days at her side. But, she trusted her, and the thought of her first day back to work suddenly made her less anxious than when her alarm clock rang.

She snuggled next to Andrea and inhaled the woman’s comforting scent. “Will you be busy at work today?” she asked. Contrary to public opinion, she was not self-centered.

“Not sure yet. We have a few writers on vacation for the holidays, and if whatever’s going on with Congress heats up, I might have to head down to D.C. for a few days. I’ll know more when I get in.”

“What? I thought you didn’t have to travel? Can’t you send someone else?” Miranda asked, half sitting up.

“I’m going to talk to John the minute I get in. If I send Ahmed and Liz, then we’re short a writer for the local New York city desk.”

“Can’t you write that?”

“Yes, but I don’t know how easily it will be for me to jump into that. It’s been a few years since I was chasing down leads, interviewing, and rushing against a deadline,” Andrea said.

“Well, you can do anything, right?” Miranda said, pecking her on the lips. “I think it would be a good opportunity for you, too. You would earn incredible respect from your staff. But,” she continued, “if you need to go to D.C., I understand.”

“Are you speaking from experience?” Andrea asked.

Miranda’s alarm began ringing again. She sat up and turned it off, then stood next to the bed, stretching gently. “During my first or second year as Editor in Chief, one of our presses jammed up from the heat wave and damaged the plates. It was August, and we were printing the September Issue, naturally. We didn’t have computers—well, not in the way we do today—so we couldn’t just click a button to replicate them. My assistant called me at one in the morning with the news, and I showed up at the plant along with a handful of other employees—Nigel was there, as was Claire, Simone, George Simmons who’s on the Board now. We replicated the damaged section by hand, which required creating new layouts on the spot. We needed something that worked with a more collage-like feel. I still remember stenciling the header: Soviet Style. My god, that feels like eons ago. Anyway,” she said, shaking her head and smoothing out the sheets, “after that, word got out that Miranda Priestly herself spent all night printing the issue, and there was a quiet sort of respect in the hallways. Of course, much has changed since then. Somehow it shifted from respect because I pitched in to misgivings because they think I only want to redo all of their work.”

“Miranda, they still respect you. Maybe for different reasons, but they do.”
“I know,” she said, walking towards the bathroom. “What time do you need to leave?”

“I don’t have to be in until 8:30,” Andrea said.

“Okay. I’m going to shower, do my makeup, go nurse the babies, wake up the girls, make some breakfast, then come back up and get dressed before I leave. Sound okay?”

“The girls aren’t going to eat breakfast at 6:15 AM, you know. James isn’t picking them up until 7:30.”

“Oh, right. Whatever, they still need to get up at 6. I need to be out the door by quarter till, so I’m jumping in the shower now,” she said.

Andrea nodded and snuggled into the warm bed.

Later that afternoon, after a series of meetings, a frantic issue with tags on the website, and Library Lunch at the NY Public Library (which, admittedly, she completely forgot about), Andrea walked into her office and closed the door. Miranda had been texting her all morning, and honestly, she hadn’t had the time to talk. Picking up the phone, she dialed Miranda’s number.

“Hey Rachel, is Miranda still there?”

“Hi Andy, no she asked me to call Roy and then left. I don’t know where she went.”

“Are the girls okay?” Andrea asked.

“As far as I know. Miranda was nervous about something this morning, though. Sorry, I have to let you go, the other line’s ringing.”

Andrea quickly hung up and dialed Miranda’s cell. She picked up after one ring.

“Andrea! Why weren’t you answering your phone?”

“Hi Miranda, I’m sorry. I had to mute it and I went from meeting to meeting, then we had the Library Lunch today…is everything okay? Where are you now?”

“I’m on my way home. Cara wasn’t answering.”

Andrea rolled her eyes. “Miranda…”

“Do not roll your eyes at me,” Miranda hissed. “My babies could be crying or hurt or god knows what.”

“I don’t even want to know how you do that. Would you like me to meet you at home?”

“I thought you had some crisis with Congress?”

“Nope, we’ve got it covered. We were able to send one of our Financial reporters to cover in D.C. I’ll come meet you—“

“Hold on, Cara’s calling,” Miranda said, switching over on call-waiting.

A minute or so later, switched back over. “Okay. False alarm,” she said, heaving a sigh of relief. “Cara was upstairs in the nursery with them and didn’t hear the phone. They’re sleeping now.”

“Are you still going home?”
“No.” Andrea heard a muffled voice direct Roy to return to the office. “No, I’m going back. I’ll try to be home when the girls get home. What about you?”

“I’ll be home at the usual time, quarter past five. Call me if anything comes up, though. Promise to answer my phone.”

“Okay, darling. Love you.”

The next few days weren’t much different. The twins spent the weekend with their father, and when they returned on Sunday evening, Cassidy had the sniffles and went to bed early. Miranda didn’t think much of it, considering they probably didn’t get much rest or proper nutrition with James. But, when Cassidy came crawling into their bed at two o’clock with a sore throat, Miranda thought otherwise.

“Take this,” Miranda said, giving her daughter a medicine cup full of liquid ibuprofen. “Try to make a gargling sound with it so it coats the back of your throat,” she said.

Cassidy did, and handed the cup back to her mother. “It still hurts.”

Miranda set the cup on her nightstand and took her daughter in her arms. “Baby, you have to give the medicine time to work,” she said, softly brushing Cassidy’s hair out of her eyes. “Try and get some rest. Are you comfortable? Do you need a drink of water or anything?”

“No. I’m comfy,” she said, snuggling closer. “Can I stay here until I fall asleep?”

“Of course, my darling,” Miranda said. “Andrea will feed the babies when they wake up, and I’ll stay here with you.”

“Mmkay. If I feel better, can I go to school? We’re getting milkshakes for Chelsea’s birthday,” Cassidy said.

“Just get some sleep. We’ll see how you feel in a little while, and then we’ll decide.” With one arm around her daughter, she reached over for her cell phone, turning it on vibrate and sending a text message to Rachel that Cassidy was sick and she would be in late. She gently sighed and kissed the top of Cassidy’s head before drifting back to sleep.

That morning, Cassidy still wasn’t feeling better. Andrea left for the office and Cara helped get Caroline ready for school while Miranda stayed in bed with her daughter who now had a bit of a fever. She wanted to give her another dose of medicine, but didn’t have the heart to wake her up.

A short while later, Miranda saw on the monitor that Callie was awake. Cassidy was still sleeping soundly at her side. She watched on the video as Cara picked her up from the crib, and about five minutes later, she quietly brought her to Miranda.

“I let her suck on a bottle of ice water for a few minutes like you asked,” she said. “There isn’t much milk in the fridge—can you nurse her?”

Miranda nodded and gestured for Cara to hand her a pillow. She tucked it along her side, then carefully lay Callie down to nurse. When she was finished, Cara traded her babies, and before long they were both fed and happily playing downstairs.

“Sweetie,” Miranda said, gently waking Cassidy. “Bobbsey, you have to get up.”

The young girl groaned and opened her eyes.
“Good morning, sweetheart. How is your throat feeling?”

“Uggh, my throat still hurts,” she said. “What time is it?”

“It’s 9:20,” Miranda said, reaching over to the nightstand for the medicine. “I’m sorry for waking you, but you need to take more medicine and have something to drink.”

Cassidy nodded and took the medicine her mother gave her. “You didn’t go to work?”

“Oh Bobbsey, I can’t think about work when one of my girls isn’t feeling well. I’m going to run downstairs and make you a cup of tea with honey—that will feel good on your throat. Do you want anything else?”

Cassidy shrugged. “I’m kind of hungry. Applesauce? Vanilla pudding?”

“Of course—I’ll be right back,” she said, getting up and tying her robe around her.

By noon, the medicine was kicking in and Cassidy was feeling well enough to get out of bed. Miranda reluctantly asked her to keep away from the babies so she wouldn’t get them sick. Cassidy agreed and settled for hanging out in her room with Miranda’s iPad all afternoon. Miranda showered, dressed, and headed to the office for a few hours.

When she called to check on her girls a few hours later, Cara informed her that Cassidy was still not feeling well, and she hinted that it was near impossible to care for the twins and Cassidy and sanitize the house.

“Andrea.”

“Miranda, how is Cassidy? Are you at work?”

“Yes, and she’s still not doing well. We’ll have to keep her home tomorrow. Cara is struggling at home, and I just…” she paused and set her glasses down on her desk. “Is there any way you can take the day off, or at least work from home?”

Andrea knew it was serious when Miranda was asking her a favor. “Yes, of course I’ll talk to John, but I’m sure working from home won’t be a problem. If nothing else, I’ll call myself in sick,” she said as she closed her laptop and began to pack it in her bag. “In fact, I’m leaving the office right now. Don’t worry about a thing.”

“Thank you, darling. Make sure that Cara can Lysol our bedroom, too. It wouldn’t do for either of us to get sick.”

“Don’t worry,” Andrea said. “I’ll handle it. See you tonight.”

Andrea left early that afternoon and spent some time helping Cara clean while Caroline, who was now home from school, played with the twins in their bouncers and Cassidy watched a movie in her room. When the twins were down for another nap, she made a quick call to John and he was surprisingly agreeable, allowing her to modify her schedule so she could work from home two days per week.

Miranda was relieved. That night, Andrea slept with Cassidy in her bedroom so she would be free to nurse. It was lonely sleeping in her bed by herself, and she half considered asking Caroline to come sleep with her, though she knew the young girl needed her rest.

By the time Monday morning rolled around, everyone was thoroughly exhausted. Cassidy’s sore
throat had turned into a cough, keeping everyone up at night. Andrea, too, started sneezing and blowing her nose, but aside from taking the babies and staying at a hotel, there was nothing Miranda could do.

The following week, Cassidy and Andrea were feeling much better. Miranda was sure to take her Vitamin C, Zinc, and Echinacea, and crossed her fingers that neither she nor the babies would catch their cold.

She was sitting in a brainstorming session in the conference room on Tuesday afternoon. Miranda worked from the townhouse the previous day, so that meant today was jammed with back-to-back meetings. At first, she didn’t notice Abby anxiously tapping on the glass door until Emily stood to deal with it. When she quickly walked around the table, Miranda knew something was wrong.

“It’s Cara—Catherine is sick,” Emily said.

Leaving her things at the table, she practically ran down the hall to her office. “Cara, what’s wrong?”

“I’m sorry to bother you, Miranda, but it’s Catherine. She’s coughing and has a fever of 101 degrees. I just gave her some Tylenol, and I’m holding some cool cloths to her, but—“

“Is that her screaming?” Miranda asked.

“Yes. She won’t take her bottle. I just can’t comfort her. I thought you’d want to know.”

Miranda glanced at the clock. 3:45 PM. “Are Cassidy and Caroline home?”

“Yes.”

“Cara, I want you to bring Catherine to the Emergency Room. Have the girls stay with Callie,” Miranda said, snapping her fingers at Abby, who confirmed that Roy was already downstairs. “I’m leaving now—I’ll meet you there. Oh, and can you bring her pink bunny blanket?”

“Yes, we’ll leave right away,” she said, ending the call.

Emily draped her coat over her shoulders and handed over her bag and iPhone while Abby stood holding the elevators.

“Would you like me to go stay with the girls at home for a while?” Emily quickly asked.

Miranda glanced up from her phone. “Yes, would you mind?”

“I’ll take care of it—call if you need anything,” she said as the elevator doors closed.

“Damnit Andrea, answer your phone,” Miranda said, hanging up when she received the young woman’s voicemail a second time. As she was about to dial again, Andrea called.

“Miranda, what’s wrong?”

“It’s Cate—“ she choked out, fighting back tears. “Meet us in the ER. Lenox Hill.”

Andrea quickly began tossing her things into her bag. “Oh god, what’s wrong?”

“I don’t know. Cara said fever, not eating, coughing, and just constant screaming,” Miranda said as she hurried through the Elias Clarke lobby to the waiting town car.
“Do you think maybe we should have called the doctor first?” Andrea asked.

“No. If it’s serious enough for Cara to call me out of a meeting, it’s bad. You know she doesn’t tell us half the stuff she deals with. I trust her judgment,” Miranda said. “Look, I have to go. Meet me there, unless you’d rather stay at the office and call the doctor.” She ended the call and tossed it into her bag as she let out a few quick sobs.

The thought that her baby was hurting caused an ache so great that she could hardly breathe herself. For the moment, she didn’t want to think about Andrea. She knew the young woman loved her children immensely, but there was just something she couldn’t explain.

When they were stopped at a traffic light on Park Avenue, Miranda looked up and wiped her eyes. “Roy, is there any way you can get there faster?” she asked.

“It’s down to one lane up there because of a pothole. If I take the side streets, it will be even longer because everyone else is trying to do that,” he said.

“Okay,” she said, nodding. She didn’t want to call Cara while she was driving, so she called the house instead, and Caroline answered. “Hi baby, is everything okay? Emily is on her way to stay with you girls for a while, okay?”

“Hi Mom. Yeah, Callie is doing fine. Cass and I are doing homework in the living room and she’s in her bouncer thing, chewing on that blue flower,” she said.

“Okay. Will you both be sure you scrub your hands with soap and hot water? And can you ask Emily to use the Lysol wipes when she gets there?”

“Sure. Is Cate going to be okay?”

“Yes, she’s going to be fine,” Miranda said, half trying to convince herself of the statement. “I’m on my way to meet them at the hospital now. Did Cara say how long she has been sick?”

“She said she’s been fussy since she woke up, and I don’t think she had a bottle since you fed her this morning. Why were her lips blueish? Was she cold?” Caroline asked.

Miranda felt like she had just been punched in the stomach.

“Mom?”

“Bobbsey,” she said slowly, trying to catch her breath, “sometimes that happens when babies are crying and screaming a lot. It’s because they’re not taking deep breaths to get oxygen. Okay, I’m almost there. Call me if Emily isn’t there in the next fifteen minutes, okay? And Caroline—“ she said, “I love you, baby. Give your sisters a hug and a kiss from me.”

“Okay. Love you too, Mom. Tell Cate we love her, too.”

“I will. Bye,” she said, hanging up.

Roy turned into the Emergency entrance and Miranda bolted from the car, pushing past an elderly man in a wheelchair as she ran up to the desk.

“Can I help you?”

“My six-month-old daughter, Catherine Priestly—she was just brought in?”

“Oh, Miranda, hi. She hasn’t arrived yet. We have a room ready in the back if you’d like to follow
“Don’t worry. We will send your nanny and your daughter directly back to the room as soon as they arrive. We’ve also called Dr. Stevens, so he should be here to evaluate her within the hour,” she said, opening the door and leading Miranda into the room. “Someone should be by shortly with a breast pump you can use. Is there anything else I can get you?”

Miranda shook her head and sat on the edge of the bed, stunned by how prepared and organized they were. “No. They should be here soon, though. And my fiancée might be coming, too.”

“Yes, I spoke with her on the phone. We’ll be sure to send them back right away,” she said, leaving the room.

Miranda took a deep breath and closed her eyes, suddenly feeling guilty for how she treated Andrea on the phone earlier. No, she wasn’t Catherine’s biological mother, but that didn’t mean she didn’t understand what Miranda was going through at the moment.

A few minutes later, Andrea walked through the door. “How is she? Are they here yet?”

“No yet,” Miranda said. Andrea sat next to her on the bed and she reached for her hand. “I feel terrible for how I treated you on the phone. I know you—“

“—shhh,” Andrea said, pressing a finger to her lips, silencing her. “You were upset and worried about Cate. Don’t worry about it.”

They sat there in silence for another minute until they heard a Cate’s cries echoing down the hallway. They both jumped up as the nurse led Cara in, carrying Cate in her car seat carrier. Miranda immediately unfastened her daughter and picked her up, hugging and kissing her as she sat on the edge of the bed.

“Catherine, sweetheart,” she whispered. “Mommy loves you, baby. Mommy wants to help you feel better, yes she does,” she whispered as Cate finally made eye contact with her. Miranda cradled her in her arms and when she brushed her cheek, she could feel how warm the infant was.

“Hi, I’m Dr. Grant,” a young blonde woman said. “I’m the pediatrician on call today. I understand Dr. Stevens is on his way. Let’s see, Mom, can you sit back in the bed and hold Catherine while I do a few tests?”

Miranda nodded, and Andrea helped adjust the bed so she was reclining. Dr. Grant carefully listened to her breathing, checked her oxygen saturation and temperature, and drew some bloodwork.

“So, she seems to have settled down a bit,” Dr. Grant said, noticing that the baby was no longer screaming now that she was in Miranda’s arms. “I would like to put her on some oxygen right away. That should help the discoloration of her lips and trunk, and then we can check out the results of the CBC for the next steps.”

“I gave her 5 mL of infant tylenol an hour ago,” Cara said. “And she had another dose around ten this morning.”

“Thank you. I think we can definitely give her some more to try and make her feel better. I’m going to have the nurse start an IV so she can get some fluids, as well, but hopefully after a little oxygen, she’ll be willing to take a bottle or nurse,” the doctor said, whispering some instructions to
“Before leaving the room, the nurse connected the oxygen mask and handed it to Miranda. “Infants don’t usually like this attached to their face, so if you can just hold it as close as you can to her nose and mouth,” she said.

“What does the doctor think it is?” Andrea asked.

“She said Catherine’s lungs sounded ‘crackly,’ which is usually an indicator of pneumonia or some sort of fluid on the lungs. She will probably want a chest x-ray to confirm anything,” she said. “Mom, can you hold her still while I start this IV in her foot?”

“Yes. And please, call me Miranda. This is Andrea, and our nanny Cara.”

A few seconds later, the nurse connected the IV drip and administered some acetaminophen. “She’s looking a little better already,” she said. “I think the O2 is really helping her color. You might try seeing if she’ll nurse a little. It’s okay to take the oxygen away for a short time like that. The doctor will be back in shortly,” she said before leaving.

“Miranda, I’m sorry. I should have called you sooner. I just thought she was teething or something,” Cara said with tears in her eyes.

“Don’t be ridiculous. I’m glad you called when you did,” Miranda said. “I’ve been trusting you with my babies for the past ten years. Just—thank you for bringing her here safely.”

“I’m going to head back to sit with the girls, then. Will you call me if anything changes?”

“Yes,” Andrea said. “Why don’t I walk you out? It would probably make more sense for you to leave the keys with us and just have Roy take you back. Hopefully we’ll be home tonight.”

It was quiet in the room, the only sounds being Catherine’s rapid breaths and coughs. Miranda softly brushed her cheek and pressed a kiss to her head. When she bent down, her hair fell in front of her eye, and it brushed against the baby’s forehead, making her giggle.

“Did that tickle?” Miranda asked. “Did Mommy’s hair tickle your forehead?” she said, bending down again and deliberately brushing her hair across the young girl’s skin.

Again, Cate smiled and giggled, but her laughter turned into a coughing fit and Miranda held her upright for a few minutes, hoping to help. Careful of the IV, she pulled Cate onto her chest and began to hum quietly as she soothingly rubbed her back.

It seemed like her daughter’s breathing had calmed, and Miranda quietly began to sing to her.

>You are my sunshine, my only sunshine.

>You make me happy when skies are grey.

>You’ll never know, dear, how much I love you.

>So please don’t take, my sunshine away…

Andrea returned to the room and quietly slipped into a chair next to the bed. “Is she asleep?” she whispered.

“No, just content.”

A few minutes passed and Catherine began to fuss again. Miranda carefully laid her on the bed
next to her, and took off her cardigan.

“Do you need help?” Andrea asked.

“No, just give me a second,” she said, slipping her arms out of the straps of her camisole, then putting the cardigan back on. “There we go,” she said, kissing Cate gently. She turned to her side and pushed her camisole down so she could free her breast.

Without needing much encouragement, Cate pressed her hand to Miranda’s breast and began nursing. Every few sucks, though, she pulled away and began to cough, causing her to spit up half—if not all—of the milk.

“Oh, I know, darling,” Miranda said sweetly. “You’re so hungry and you can’t even eat because of this cough.” She carefully slipped her finger inside Cate’s mouth after nursing for a few seconds to pull her away and wait until she swallowed. “Andrea, is there a bulb syringe around? It might help her breathe.”

“I’ll go find the nurse,” she said, rushing out of the room. Before she could return, Dr. Stevens came in.

“Miranda, Catherine, how are we doing?” he asked, watching how Miranda was controlling her feeding. “Is she coughing it up?”

“Yes,” Miranda said. “I don’t know how this all started. She was absolutely fine this morning. No coughing whatsoever.”

“Well, this tends to come on quickly. I reviewed her chart and the bloodwork definitely signals she’s fighting an infection. I would like to do a chest x-ray just to be certain, but I want to start her on IV antibiotics right away, then maybe a few breathing treatments. She had her pneumococcus vaccine, right?”

“They both did. They should be getting their second booster in a few weeks,” Miranda said.

Dr. Stevens nodded as he listened to her chest. “This must be a different strain of bacteria, then. She definitely has pneumonia. But the bright side—antibiotics will make her feel better very quickly.”

Miranda tucked her breast back into her bra and wiped the tears from her eyes. “Can we get her started on the antibiotics right away?”

“Of course, right after the chest x-ray,” Dr. Stevens said.

“Does she still need it?”

“Yes.”

“I thought you said that she ‘definitely’ has pneumonia? What is the purpose of the x-ray?” Miranda asked. Andrea had returned to the room and was quietly standing by the doorway, watching Miranda do her thing.

“W-well, you know, it’s common procedure to—“

“To what? To put my baby under unnecessary tests? Like she’s some experiment so you can show a group of interns what they can find in any textbook or on the internet?”
“I—it’s not just that,” he said quickly. “It would help us to rule out any other potential problems, as well.”

“Oh, then by all means, take scans of her entire body—to rule out other problems,” Miranda snapped. She took a deep breath and pressed a kiss down to her daughter’s nose. “Catherine is not having the x-ray. That’s all.”

Dr. Stevens nodded, then whispered something to his nurse. “She’s giving her antibiotics now. I’ll write a prescription for a suspension for you to administer at home, as well as an inhaler with nebulizer. I’d like her to stay until her O² saturation can hold its own in the nineties. The nurse will also show you how to do some chest physiotherapy to help loosen the mucous and encourage her to cough it up.”

“What about a cough syrup or tylenol for her fever?” Miranda asked.

“Her fever should go down with the antibiotics. If she needs a cough suppressant so she can sleep at night, you can give her up to 4 cc of something like Delsym for children—not the adult version. It’s important that she coughs and spits out any mucous.”

“One last question,” Andrea said, finally speaking up. “How long is she going to be contagious for? Should we keep her sister away from her?”

“Actually, the incubation period will be over by the time she returns home. Of course, practice good hand washing, don’t share bottles or teething toys, you know. But if she sneezes on Callista, it’s not like she’s spreading pneumonia.”

“Thank you, doctor. We’ll be sure to call if we have any additional questions,” Andrea said, opening the door for him to leave.

After giving Catherine the antibiotics, the nurse checked her oxygen. “It’s going to take an hour for these fluids and antibiotics to get through her system, and by that time I think her oxygen will be doing much better, too. Can I get you anything to make you more comfortable?” When there was no response, she shrugged. “Okay then, I’ll be in to check on her later.”

Once the nurse left, Andrea walked over and sat on the edge of the bed, gently taking Catherine’s hands. Her eyes were droopy, and she would no doubt be falling asleep soon after her exhausting day. Andrea gently kissed her tummy, then looked up at Miranda.

“I can sit with her if you need to get up and stretch or anything,” Andrea said.

Miranda was about to protest when a young man pushed a breast pump into the room on a wheeled cart. She sighed and kissed Catherine, then got up and took a seat in the chair so she could pump. Between being back at work and Callie cutting teeth, the babies were given bottles more often than not, though it still meant a considerable commitment on Miranda’s part. As she situated herself, she watched Andrea snuggle up with Catherine and it warmed her heart.

Later that night, around nine o’clock, the doctor signed the discharge papers. Catherine’s oxygen was back to normal and her fever went down. The nurse demonstrated the chest physiotherapy for the women, but advised that they let Cate get some rest before trying it.

At ten o’clock, Andrea was pulling their SUV to a stop in front of the house to let Miranda and Catherine out before pulling it into the garage. Catherine fell asleep during the car ride, so Miranda quietly carried her upstairs and laid her in her crib without starting a commotion. In the nursery, she peeked over at Callie who must have woken when she opened the door, as her eyes were open and
she was looking up at the glow-in-the-dark stars painted on her ceiling.

“Hi love bug,” Miranda whispered, gently resting her hand on Callie’s chest. “I missed you today. Go back to sleep, baby,” she said.

Closing the nursery door, she could hardly make it to her own bedroom before collapsing to the floor. It was as if all the emotions of the day suddenly erupted, and it was too much to bear.

Andrea came in the back door, and saw Emily, Serena, Caroline, Cassidy, and Nigel sitting around the table. “Hey,” she said, walking over to the fridge and adding a few bottles of milk from her bag. “Thanks guys, you can head home now.”

“How’s Catherine?” Emily asked.

“Where’s Miranda?” Nigel said.

“Uh, she came in the front door about ten minutes ago—maybe she went upstairs since Cate was asleep?” Andrea said. “Anyway, Cate has pneumonia. They gave her some oxygen and antibiotics, and sent us home with some medicine, too.”

“Poor baby!” Serena said.

“What’s pneumonia?” Cassidy asked.

“It’s uh, you know when you have a cold and you’re blowing stuff out of your nose?” Andrea said.

“Boogers?”

Everyone chuckled. “Yeah, but it’s nicer to call it mucous. Anyway, pneumonia is when that mucous forms in your lungs instead of your nose. It can make you really sick if you don’t take medicine to help it.”

“But Cate is taking medicine. She’s going to be okay, right?” Cassidy asked.

“Yes, sweetie. She’s still going to be coughing for a few days, but it’s important so she can cough all that yucky stuff out of her lungs,” Andrea said.

“Did Miranda say whether she’ll be in tomorrow?” Emily asked.

“We honestly didn’t talk about it. I can work from home tomorrow, but I think she’ll probably want to take the day off,” Andrea said. “Thank you for coming and staying with the girls—you should go get some rest though.”

“Thanks.” Emily and Serena got up and said goodbye to everyone before heading out the door.

“Nigel, I didn’t know you were coming, too,” Andrea said.

“He’s got a problem,” Caroline said, pointing to the pictures laid out on the table. “This dress,” she said, touching the photo with her index finger, “got lost in the mail. Mr. Oscar only made one of them, and that was the one Mom wanted on the cover next month.”

Andrea smiled. “Well, it’s February 2nd, so I think we have some time,” she said.

“No, actually. Kate will be in New Zealand for the next two weeks. Tomorrow is our only chance to shoot the cover unless we totally revamp the issue,” Nigel said.
“I already asked if there wasn’t something else in the closet that she could wear, but Uncle Nigel said it had to be something more special,” Caroline said, crossing her arms over her chest.

Andrea looked up and could see the concern in Nigel’s eyes. “This is the one that’s supposed to have the hand-painted gown, right? There’s going to be that piece on French Impressionism inside?” He nodded. “Can’t you do something with the art itself? Like, I don’t know, wrap her in those Water Lilies scarves from the art museum or something.”

“It has to feature de la Renta. Literally, the entire concept of this issue hinges on the cover,” he said, taking off his glasses and rubbing his brow.

“What about body paint? You were going to use it last month but ended up changing your mind,” Andrea said.

“What about body paint says de la Renta?”

“Paint her to look like she’s wearing the dress? Then feature it inside on someone else by the time someone can track it down? I don’t know, Nigel, I don’t work for Runway!” Andrea said.

“That’s why I came here to see Miranda.”

“Give me five minutes, let me see what’s keeping her,” Andrea said, running upstairs.

When Andrea walked into the bedroom, Miranda was standing in front of the dresser, wearing her grey robe. Her eyes were red-rimmed and she was fixated on the baby monitor.

“Hey, everything okay?” Andrea asked, wrapping her arm gently around her waist.

Miranda wiped her eyes and nodded. “It all kind of hit me again after I laid her down,” she said. Andrea hugged her and kissed her gently on the lips. “Nigel is downstairs. The dress for the cover shoot tomorrow hasn’t arrived yet,” she said.

Miranda’s eyes widened as she quickly put the pieces together. “And he wants my opinion?”

“I’m pretty sure he wants you to make the decision on this one,” Andrea said.

“The only other de la Renta piece we could feature is a gown that’s currently in Milan and would never be here in time,” Miranda said. “We’ll put Kate in the most elaborate de la Renta necklace and bracelets and rings we can find and then drape some sort of blank canvas over her. If Oscar can’t get us the dress, we can’t put it on the cover. End of story.”

Andrea smiled and kissed her. “You’re so smart. Will you go tell that to Nigel and I’ll start drawing us up a hot bath?”

Miranda nodded and left the room. Not ten minutes later, Miranda returned to their room and shut the door. “All four girls are in bed and Nigel has his instructions,” she said. “I even went in and checked on Catherine and she’s doing fine, too.”

Andrea was tying her hair up in a topknot before stepping in the bathtub. “Come here. I’ve got the monitor all setup on the iPad right here so we can keep an eye on them,” she said, pointing to the ledge just beyond the tub.

Miranda smiled and followed, slipping off her robe and climbing into the tub with the young woman. Andrea’s arms were wrapped tightly around her, but tonight, it was what she needed. After
the emotional toll of the last eight hours, all she could do was sit in Andrea’s arms and cry.

The next few months saw their share of ups and downs—thankfully, none meriting another trip to the emergency room. As the trees and flowers began to bloom with the freshness of springtime, Miranda herself felt a sort of rebirth that had nothing to do with floral patterns or color-blocking.

In April, Miranda went for her nine-month postpartum follow-up with her gynecologist, Dr. Assaf. It was a Wednesday afternoon. She, Andrea, and the four girls had plans to spend a long weekend in Sagaponack, and she was eager for the opportunity to escape the city for a few days. When Dr. Assaf asked to see photos of the babies, Miranda eagerly reached for her phone, pulling up dozens of adorable candids.

“They’re growing up so fast, Miranda. I can’t believe they’re up on their feet already,” she said.

“Yes, they’ll be walking any day now,” she said, wiping a tear from her eye as she put her phone back into her bag.

Dr. Assaf paused for a moment and sat in the chair next to Miranda. She gently placed her hand on Miranda’s shoulder and bent down, trying to make eye contact with the woman.

Miranda sniffled and reached up once more to brush the tears from her cheek. “I’m sorry—I’m just a little emotional,” she muttered.

“Miranda, how have you been?” she asked.

“Like I said, I’ve been sticking to my diet and fitness plan, I haven’t had any problems breastfeeding—”

“No, Miranda. I know all that. I want to know how you have been doing. Life with two newborns can be challenging,” she said.

Miranda leaned forward and buried her head in her hands as she began to cry while Dr. Assaf patiently waited for her to gather her thoughts. “I love it—really, I do. They’re perfect, but I don’t have enough time to spend with them. They’re not newborns anymore. They’re eating solids and practically walking, and I’m afraid that I’m missing out—or that I won’t be there or something.”

“Are you often emotional like this?” Dr. Assaf asked.

Miranda frowned and nodded.

“To the point where you’re in tears?”

Again, Miranda nodded. “Nearly every day,” she said.

“Is there anything that helps or makes it worse? Spending a day with Catherine and Callie? Or maybe a nice hot bath once they’re asleep?”

Miranda shook her head. “I cry when I’m away from them. I cry when Andrea does something nice for me—she’s always doing nice things for me. I feel awful. I guess the only time I don’t cry is when I’m playing with them,” she said.

“Miranda, why haven’t you said something sooner?”

She shrugged. “It was really bad the first day or so we brought them home, but then it seemed okay and I guess I just accepted that this was me.”
Dr. Assaf stood and walked over to the laptop on the counter and began typing a few notes. “I’m going to draw some additional bloodwork and run a full hormone panel. This is not normal, and I expect your body has been highly sensitive to the drop in progesterone since giving birth.”

“Really?” Miranda asked, looking up for the first time since she began to cry.

“Yes, really. That’s why I wish you would have come in sooner. Also, with your age, I would expect to see some other hormones out of balance as well. You know, the day you came in to see me last January, I was going to advise you on the symptoms of perimenopause before we saw the results of that pregnancy test.”

“Menopause?” Miranda groaned. “This is not making me feel any better, you know.”

“Perimenopause. It means you’re not there yet. Some women can hang out in perimenopause for a decade. Now, if we do decide that you could use some hormone-replacement therapy, you’ll probably want to begin weaning your daughters from breast milk. An increase in progesterone in your system will tell your body to stop producing milk—but that’s not a bad thing. It’s in the first nine months that babies get all those really important antibodies from you, anyway.”

“So—you really think this is why I’ve been so emotional lately?”

“Miranda, nine months is more significant than ‘lately’…and yes, I absolutely think this is all related. Do you feel like you might need some medication for the time being? An anti-anxiety medication or a mood stabilizer?”

Miranda’s eyes widened.

“You seem curious. I’ll write you a prescription for Tegretol. It’s one of the mildest mood stabilizers out there, and at 50 mg twice a day, it won’t pose any harm to the babies through breast milk,” Dr. Assaf said, handing Miranda the prescription. “I would try it this weekend and see how you handle it. You should begin to see a difference in a few days.”

“Thank you,” Miranda said.

“Of course. Don’t be afraid to get help. I know you’re reluctant to admit when you need it, but I’m sure I speak for your partner, as well, when I say I want you to enjoy your life and not spend your babies’ nap time drowning. Now, the phlebotomist will be in to draw your blood shortly, but please call me if you have any questions.”

“Thank you,” Miranda said, shaking her hand.

Later that night, when they were packing for their drive to the Hamptons, Miranda told Andrea all about her doctor appointment, checking for a hormone imbalance, and the mood stabilizers.

“I’m sorry I’ve been such a mess,” Miranda said. Andrea tried to protest, but Miranda silenced her with her index finger to her lips. “We began seeing each other when I was three months pregnant. You massaged my feet and my back. You kept me going during my labor. You put up with me completely losing it—more than once—after the babies were born. You gave Caroline and Cassidy attention so they wouldn’t feel left out. You draw baths for me. You camped out on the floor in the nursery with me. You bring me hot tea when I’m up late working… Without you, I know I couldn’t do this, but it’s not fair for me to rely on you so much.”

When she finished, Andrea hugged her and kissed her on the cheek. “Yes, I’ve done a lot for you, but you’ve been nothing but grateful and appreciative, and I’d do it all over in a heartbeat. What you apparently fail to realize is that in this past year, you’ve made me happier than I could ever
imagine. You gave me two beautiful daughters—four, really. You’ve made me feel safe, sleeping with your arms around me. You turn all the lights down when I have a headache and you gently massage my scalp. You’ve lavished ridiculous gifts on me—from diamonds to artworks to gowns. You welcomed me into your home and into your family. You’ve given me the greatest gift, Miranda. It’s such an overwhelming feeling—whether I’m here in your arms or sitting at my desk at work—and I’m just so…content. I don’t need to worry about what to say to you or how I can get your attention. I’m not afraid that you’ll leave me or worried that your daughters will not approve. It’s peaceful and calm, a quiet strength I feel within me. It’s love.”

“You really mean that?” Miranda asked. “There’s so much more I want to be able to do for you, to support you like you did me.”

“It doesn’t matter. It doesn’t have to be one-for-one. It’s just, oooohhh!” she said, squeezing Miranda tightly and pinning her to the bed. “I love you so much. I love our life, our children, your ex-husband’s mother, my little office at The Mirror, your amazing office at Runway. I love it all and wouldn’t for a minute to want any of it to change even though Irv can be an ass and Helen is a little scary and Caroline and Cassidy are way too smart for their age. I love it. I can’t even find a word for it,” she groaned, leaning in to kiss Miranda’s lips.

When she pulled away, Miranda was smiling up at her. “I know,” she said. “It’s bliss.”

“Mmm, yes. Bliss.”

“Why don’t you have a bed like this at the townhouse?” Andrea asked.

“Didn’t fit up the stairwell,” Miranda said, snuggling closer. “Plus, smaller beds mean more cuddling,” she said as she pressed a kiss to Andrea’s chest.

“That is true,” Andrea said. “But with a bed this size, we wouldn’t have to worry about the girls pushing us over the edge.”

Miranda chuckled. “On that note, it’s curious no one’s awake yet, isn’t it?”

“Nah, I think they’re all letting you sleep in.”

“Oh really? Who told you that, Callie?” Miranda said with a chuckle.

“Actually, yes. She told me you were the best mother in the whole wide world and she wanted to make sure you got enough sleep so you could play with her at the beach today,” Andrea said.

“What is it with children and sand?” Miranda asked.

“Aww, come on. You have to admit it was pretty cute watching Care and Cass make sandcastles for them to knock down. Plus, it’s supposed to rain Saturday and Sunday, so this is their last chance to feel the sand between their toes.”

Miranda shook her head. “You talk as if we’re never coming back here. Darling, we can come back every weekend this summer if you want,” she said.

“I don’t want them anywhere near the ocean once they start walking. I’ll go crazy,” Andrea said. “You see how I freak out watching them crawl around near the stairs.”

Miranda laughed and kissed the young woman. “I love that you’re so protective,” she said. Sitting up, she reached for her watch from the nightstand and gasped. “Is it really quarter past ten?” She
jumped out of bed and hurried to slip into lounge pants and a tank before wrapping her robe around her. “It’s way too quiet in here,” she said, walking out of the bedroom in search of her daughters.

Andrea quickly jumped up and followed her, practically running into the woman outside the second bedroom.

“Shh,” Miranda whispered, pressing her finger to her lips. “Look.”

Andrea peered over Miranda’s shoulder and wrapped her arms around the woman as she warmed at the sight. Cassidy was sitting on the floor with Catherine, flipping through the pages of the latest issue of *Runway*, while Caroline was at the other end of the room, sitting on a quilt, eating Cheerios with Callie.

“Good morning, my darlings,” Miranda said, kneeling on the ground with the girls. “Have you been awake long?”

“We gave them their bottles earlier,” Cassidy said.

“Yeah! And we changed their diapers,” Caroline said proudly.

“Why didn’t you wake us up?” Andrea asked.

“We heard Mom on the phone talking about a new medicine and saying something about being tired. We were awake and thought you guys could stay in bed and rest,” Caroline said, shrugging.

The girls were still focused on the infants next to them, so they didn’t notice the glance exchanged between the two women.

“Well, thank you for letting me rest,” Miranda said. “I have so much energy now, I think we all need to go back to the beach to build sandcastles again today. You go put on some play clothes, and Andrea and I will look after the babies and get dressed, okay?”

“What do you mean she’s ‘come down with something?’” Miranda asked. “She was fine when I left this morning.”

“Well, she was throwing up in the bathroom when I was about to leave, so I sent her home.”

“Did the girls get to school?”

“Yes. Roy took them. Miranda, I have a few big meetings today, and I’ve already pushed the one with our VP of Advertising back an hour. I can’t stay home. Can you spare Abby or Rachel?” Andrea asked.

“No. I just gave Abby a list of urgent errands—and I do mean urgent. Rachel’s busy with the run-through, then she needs to finalize the expense report by five…” her voice trailed off. “This might sound crazy, but what if you bring them here?”

“To your office? *Runway? Elias Clarke?”* Andrea could practically see Miranda rolling her eyes on the other end of the line.

“Of course.”

“Are you sure? They’re going to want to run all over the place. It would have been much easier before they started walking,” Andrea said.
“I’ll figure it out. Can you pack a bag quickly and get over here?”

“Sure. Do you mind if I just drop them off, then take the car to work?”

“No that’s fine. Call me when you leave and I’ll come meet you downstairs,” Miranda said, hanging up the phone.

“Guess what, girls?” Andrea said. “You’re going to see Mommy’s work today. We need to get you dressed!” She tickled Cate’s tummy, causing the young girl to erupt in giggles.

She took their hands and led them carefully up the stairs to their room. Miranda had a second handrail installed along the wall on the first flight of stairs a few weeks ago, just for this purpose. Andrea selected two summery outfits that Oscar sent over a few weeks ago, then packed up a bag with diapers, wipes, a change of clothes, a few toys, and one of Miranda’s silk scarves.

She had to make a few trips up and down the stairs since they weren’t quite steady going down yet, but she managed. In the kitchen, she added their sippy cups, a few jars of food, spoons, and some cheerios. After securing them in their car seats, she carried them one by one to the car, then grabbed her own bag for work and tossed it on the front seat. A quick phone call to Miranda and she was on her way.

Miranda spent the next ten minutes tidying up her office and trying to baby-proof it as best she could. Luckily, most of the sharp edges of the furniture would be above their height. She moved a chair in front of the one exposed outlet, and secured a few knickknacks on a higher shelf.

“Rachel, see if you can find any quilts or blankets in the Art Department,” she said. “I only want them if they’re clean,” she added. Deciding she gave Andrea sufficient time, she headed to the elevators.

“Look, there’s Mommy!” Andrea said as she unfastened Catherine from the car seat.

“Ma-ma?” Catherine babbled, looking around. When she spotted Miranda, she smiled and reached out.

Miranda picked her up and kissed her on the nose. She kissed Miranda on the cheek—well, more like licked—and put her fingers by Miranda’s mouth.

In the meantime, Andrea helped Callie out, and Miranda bent down to give her other daughter a hug and kiss, too. Callie’s hugs typically involved hair-pulling and cheek-smacking, so she was grateful that she was gentle this morning.

“You probably want their carriers, right? Just in case they need to nap or something?”

“Yes,” Miranda said, gesturing to the security guard who was standing next to their vehicle. “Can you see that all this is brought up to my office?”

“Yes, ma’am,” he said.

“Andrea?”

“Yeah?” she said, turning around. Miranda was standing on the sidewalk with Cate on her hip and Callie standing next to her, clutching her skirt.

“I love you, darling. Hope your meetings go well today.”
Andrea smiled. “I love you, too. And I love you,” she said, kissing Cate, “and you,” she said, bending down to hug and kiss Callie. “Be good today.”

“Ma-ma!” Callie called after Andrea.

“Come on, sweetie,” Miranda said, quickly taking her hand. “We’re going to go see Uncle Nigel and Auntie Emily and Auntie Serena.”

“Ne-na, ne-na,” Catherine said.

“Yes, come on,” she said, gently guiding Callie into the building and towards the elevators. Miranda pressed 19 for Runway, and as soon as the doors closed, Callie went running towards the mirror-like elevator walls and began pressing open-mouth kisses to her reflection.

“Callie, no, that’s icky,” Miranda said, tugging her away and squatting down. “You only kiss Mama, okay?” she pressed a kiss to her lips, then one to Catherine’s, then another to Callie’s, causing both girls to start giggling.

When the elevator doors opened, she stepped out, still holding Callie by the hand. It was very noisy today, and she instantly felt her daughters tense up. Catherine clutched tightly at her blouse, while Callie just stopped right in the middle of the elevator lobby.

Miranda softly brushed her cheek, “Come on, Callie,” she said, sweetly coaxing her down the hall. By now, the floor was practically silent—someone must have spotted her and sent out some sort of alert.

She walked the girls into her office and set Catherine down on the couch, then took a seat next to her, pulling Callie into her lap, hugging and kissing her while they both took in their surroundings. She figured her office would be the most comfortable place in the building for them, since Andrea informed her on more than one occasion that the room just smelled like her—something she was sure the babies would appreciate.

As she was playing peek-a-boo with the girls, Nigel walked in. “Miranda, these lay— Oh!” he said. “Wow, this is a surprise.”

“Cara was sick. Andrea had a meeting.” She turned to look at the girls, “and we have a run-through this morning, yes we do.”

Nigel smiled as he just observed the totally domestic side of Miranda, present for the first time within the walls of Runway.

Miranda looked up at him, jolting him from his thoughts. “These layouts—on here you have a note that the backlight needs to be adjusted, but on this one, it would be way too dark. I was thinking we do them in black and white to balance the contrast,” he said, showing her the photos.

She held Callie tightly on her lap and grabbed her hands to keep her from reaching for the layouts. “Hmm, yes, that could work. Or we could superimpose a sort of spotlight on just this portion over here.”

“True. I’ll work both up. Thanks,” he said, turning to leave. “Oh, and do you need help with that?” he asked as he pointed his finger in the general direction of the babies.

“No. I think we can manage just fine, don’t you?” she asked, tickling Catherine’s feet as she took her shoes off. “Let’s see what toys your mommy packed for you,” she said, digging into the bag security just dropped off.
In the meantime, Rachel brought a few blankets in and helped Miranda spread them out on the floor. Callie was content sitting on the floor and playing with the Hermes scarf, putting it in her mouth while she babbled away. Miranda sat at her desk chair with Catherine in her lap as she examined the stack of papers that needed her approval.

She was amazed at how content Catherine was just sitting in her lap—and she was actually quite productive for nearly an hour, until Callie began crawling around. “Looks like we have to follow your sister,” she said to Catherine, letting her sit by the couch as she ran after Callie who was crawling past Rachel’s desk.

“Emily!” Miranda yelled to the redhead who was racing down the hall. She stopped just before she collided with the infant.

“Oh!” Emily said, bending down. “And are you our new assistant, Callie?” she asked.

“Mi-mi, mi-mi, mi-mi,” Callie babbled as she reached up and pet Emily’s face.

“You’re ‘Mi-mi’?” Miranda asked. “Of course. Andrea and I were trying to figure that out all week.”

Emily smiled and picked the girl up. “Apparently so,” she said.

“Well, she’s been asking for you,” Miranda said, quickly peeking back into her office to make sure Catherine wasn’t getting into any trouble.

“What’s the occasion?”

“Cara was sick, and you,” she said, taking Callie from her arms, “are too busy today to be distracted. Say bye to Mi-mi,” Miranda said waving to Emily.

“I’ll try to sneak another visit in before I leave,” she said, winking at the young girl.

Miranda carried Callie back into her office. Catherine was happily chewing on the Hermes scarf now, so she quickly grabbed a few of the files off her desk and handed them to Rachel.

“I’m finished with these. I’ll try to get to the fall/winter editorial calendar next, since I know they’ve been waiting a few days on that, and then after lunch I’ll review the ad map the digital team sent over. Do they have a live version of it so I can see how it actually looks on the website?”

“Yes, I’ll send you the link. I should be finished with the budget by 3:30, so when you’re finished with the run-through, you can review before we send it off,” Rachel said. “Did you want me to reschedule your lunch with Irv?”

Miranda rolled her eyes. “No. Let’s just order in. That bistro on 43rd is fine. Be sure to get a side of french fries for the girls—no salt, not too crispy. I’ll take the chef salad, and you can ask Irv what he would like.”

“Yes, Miranda,” she said, biting her lip as she tried to hold back a smile.

“What?”

“Nothing. It’s just—she’s pulling your hair and sucking on your shirt.”

Miranda smiled. “Callie’s version of hugs and kisses,” she said. “I’m going to close my door—not because I don’t want to be disturbed, but because I don’t want them crawling out into the hallway.”
Be careful opening it,” she said. Miranda pulled out a few toys and poured some juice into their sippy cups, letting them play on the quilt for a while so she could review the calendar.

Once she finished, she handed the folder back to Rachel, then shut the door again. Catherine was chewing on a stuffed octopus, while Callie was attempting to climb onto the couch. Miranda selected a book from her windowsill and sat on the quilt.

“Come here, girls. Let’s read a story,” she said. Catherine came speed-crawling right onto Miranda’s lap, and Miranda reached around and tugged Callie next to her.

She opened the book, which happened to be a collection of photographs by Patrick Demarchelier in the 1990s, and began. “Once upon a time there was princess named Callista,” Miranda said.

“Cess,” Catherine echoed quietly.

“And Princess Callista had a sister named Princess Catherine,” Miranda said as she slowly flipped the pages in the book. “Princess Catherine always wore a pretty blue dress,” she said, pointing to the blue dress the woman in the photo was wearing. She turned the page. “Princess Callista, on the other hand, insisted on wearing pink.” She pointed to another photo of a woman in a rose-colored gown.

Miranda continued to narrate a story until she reached the end of the book. When she closed it, Callie clapped her hands together. “We’ll read another story later,” Miranda said, hugging her girls. “Now, I’m going to give you something to eat, and then Mommy is going to have lunch with Mr. Ravitz,” she said.

Several hours later, just when the run-through was finishing, Andrea arrived.

“Darling, are you finished with work?”

“Yes. Boss gave me the rest of the day off,” she said, hugging her daughter. “How was your day?”

“It was great,” Miranda said. “We played with scarves and read stories and felt some different textures of fabric…honestly, it was fine.”

“Well, I can take them home now if you want,” Andrea said.

“Actually, do you just want to hang around here for an hour, then I’ll come home with you? There’s just one thing I have to finish up, and I can do the rest at home.”

“Sure, the girls have rehearsal for their spring play after school, so they won’t be home until 4:30, anyway,” Andrea said, sitting on the couch with Callie. “Let’s watch a video and let Mommy get her work done,” she said as she pulled out her iPad. She helped Cate onto the couch.

Seeing Andrea with the girls on the couch was all the incentive she needed to finish reviewing the budget. The sooner she was finished, the sooner she could go home with her family.

Over the next few weeks, the weather was getting warmer, and Caroline and Cassidy were once again on summer vacation. Miranda was concerned that her older daughters were constantly helping out with the babies, so she decided to arrange some short trips for them over the summer. James was going to take them to Boston for a week, then Andrea was going to take them to Washington D.C. for a long weekend, and finally Miranda would take them to Philadelphia for another long weekend. She wanted her daughters to have a sense of individuality and independence.
But now, it was June and it was the first week of their summer vacation. Miranda took the day off to spend with her girls, and was surprised to see Andrea come home in the middle of the afternoon.

“Well, hello. I didn’t expect you home so soon,” she said, meeting Andrea at the door. The woman’s eyes looked glassy. “Is everything alright?”

“Just another headache,” Andrea said. “I’m going to go lie down upstairs.”

“Oh…can I get you anything?”

“No, thanks,” she said, heading up the stairs.

Miranda stood there at the base of the stairs, thinking about the last few weeks. Andrea had been very busy with work and was suffering from really intense migraines. There were even days when Miranda took the girls out for a walk or a drive just so Andrea could rest in the peace and quiet. The more she thought about it, they hadn’t had sex in a while—and the last few times, while Miranda was more than willing, Andrea declined.

Biting the bullet, Miranda climbed the stairs after her.

“I thought you were taking the girls to Bryant Park today?” Andrea said as she crawled onto the bed.

Miranda gently sat at the edge. “Yes, but that can wait. I’m worried about you,” she said.

“Why? I’m fine. It’s just those summer allergies making my sinuses crazy,” Andrea said.

“When was the last time you saw a doctor for them? Maybe they have a new medication they can offer you.”

“I’m fine. I just need to sit in the dark for a while.”

Miranda sighed and softly brushed the young woman’s arm. “You haven’t even wanted to be intimate lately,” she said quietly.

“Is that what this is about? We’re not fucking enough?” Andrea snapped. “I’m sorry. I’m crabby—this headache.”

Miranda bit her lip and counted to ten in her head, trying to calm her thoughts before responding. “You would tell me if there was something else, right? I feel like you’re shutting me out here,” she said.

“It’s just this headache. I’m trying to shut everything out—sound, light, everything.”

“Okay,” Miranda said. She wasn’t fully satisfied, but she didn’t want to push.

“Oh, and this weekend I have to head to Buffalo for a conference—I’m leaving first thing Friday morning, and I’ll be back Sunday,” Andrea said. “I forgot to tell you, sorry.”

“Oh, well, that’s fine. Cara will be here Friday, and James has the girls anyway. Maybe me, Callie, and Catherine can come with you?” Miranda asked.

“No, there’s back-to-back sessions. It would be boring. I’ll be back before you can miss me.”

Okay. We can talk more later. I’ll take the girls to the park now so you can have the house to yourself to rest,” Miranda said before she walked out of the bedroom. Something still didn’t seem
right, but she wasn’t about to push Andrea now. She knew how debilitating a migraine could be, and this was not the time to have a serious talk.

Later that week, Andrea was packing up a small bag for her trip. Her headache from earlier in the week still hadn’t gone away, but when Miranda suggested she skip the conference, Andrea lashed out, causing Miranda to leave the room and go sit with the girls.

Friday morning, Miranda pretended to be asleep when Andrea left because she didn’t feel like fighting at six in the morning.

“Hey Em, I’m heading there now. You’re sure I can stay at your place for a few days?” Andrea said.

“Of course. I’ve been spending a lot of nights at Serena’s anyway.”

“Good. Also, um, you’re still willing to come get me if I need?”

“Yes, and if you make it home on your own, I’m still coming by tonight to check on you. But I don’t understand why you won’t tell Miranda. You know she’s going to be furious when she finds out,” Emily said.

“Which is exactly why she can’t find out. I’ll be fine. It’s an outpatient procedure. They’re going to remove the fibroids, then send me home.”

“Okay. I’ll keep my cell phone on me if you need anything. Good luck!”

“Thanks. Bye,” Andrea said, hanging up the phone as her taxi approached the hospital entrance.

Later that evening, Andrea was curled up on the couch, fast asleep. She didn’t even hear Emily and Serena enter until Serena sat on the edge of the couch and woke her.

“Andy, honey, how are you doing?” she asked.

Andrea tried to sit up and grimaced. “Uhh, it’s actually a lot more painful than I thought it would be,” she said.

Emily picked up the prescription bottle from the coffee table and handed one to Andrea with a glass of water. “Miranda has been trying to reach you all day. I think she even asked Rachel to call all the hotels in Buffalo since your cell phone apparently wasn’t getting any reception,” Emily said.

“Oh shit—I forgot to turn it back on after the surgery. Can you grab my bag?”

Emily handed it to her, and she fished the phone out, turning it back on.

“Well, only thirteen missed texts and five voicemails,” she said with a sigh. “Look, I have to call her back. Thanks for coming by—I’m okay, really.”

“Andy, you really should tell her the truth. I don’t even understand why you’re hiding this,” Serena said.

“Look, at this point, I can’t tell her. I lied for months about my headaches, never told her when I was seeing the doctor—she’s going to be so hurt, I can’t let that happen,” Andrea said, cradling the phone in her hands.

“Honey, she loves you and she will understand. I think she’ll be more hurt if she has to find out on her own.”
“And remember, this is Miranda Priestly,” Emily added. “She will find out.”

“I can’t,” Andrea said. “Please. Just go. I’m fine. I’ll head home Sunday morning, unless you need me out sooner.”

Emily shrugged. “We’ll leave you alone. Come on, Serena.”

“Thanks again,” Andrea called out after them.

Summoning her courage, she dialed Miranda’s number. It was time to check in.

The woman answered on the first ring. “Andrea? Hello?”

“How Miranda. Sorry I missed your messages earlier—I had my phone muted in my bag and didn’t pull it out until I just now got back to my room. Is everything okay with the girls?”

“Yes, yes, they’re fine. I think Callie misses you—she keeps watching the front door. I got nervous when you weren’t answering.”

“Again, I’m sorry. I’ll be sure to check my phone all day tomorrow,” Andrea said.

“So how is the conference?”

“Oh, you know, schmoozing and exchanging business cards, feigning interest, all that. I’m actually pretty tired, though, and I was just going to take a shower and get some sleep,” she said.

“Okay. Is your headache better?”

“A little.”

“Okay, good. So, goodnight?”

“Yeah, goodnight, Miranda. Love you. Tell the girls I love them, too, will you?”

“Of course. Goodnight, darling. I love you, too.”

The next day, Andrea was extremely grateful that Serena had left out some delivery menus in the kitchen because she was not feeling up to leaving the apartment. She was still bleeding pretty heavily from the surgery, and although the sharp, stabbing pains were gone, she still felt an uncomfortable tightness in her lower abdomen.

At the townhouse, Miranda was enjoying a quiet morning with the babies, watching the news on the television. When the house phone rang, she answered without looking at the caller ID.

“How?”

“Hi, is Andy there?”

“No, she’s not available. Should I give her a message?” Miranda asked. The irony of her taking messages for her former assistant was not lost on her.

“Nah, I just wanted to see how she was doing. Sorry—it’s John, her manager from The Mirror,” he said.

“Oh, John, of course,” Miranda said. “She’s up in Buffalo now, but you should be able to reach her on her cell if you need.”
“What’s she doing in Buffalo?”

Miranda paused for a moment. “She’s at a conference…for work, I thought?”

“Hmm, that was a few weeks ago and Andy didn’t attend. I was just calling to ask how her surgery went yesterday,” he said. “I wanted to know if she’ll be able to do some work on Monday.”

Miranda’s heart was racing. She could hardly find the words to finish the conversation. “Oh, of course, I must have my weekends confused. I’ll let her know you called.”

“Okay. Take care!” he said, ending the call.

Without a second thought, Miranda dialed Andrea’s cell phone and got her voicemail. Next, she tried Nigel, who also didn’t answer, and then Emily.

“Hello?”

“Emily, where is Andrea?”

“Hi Miranda, this is actually Serena. Em’s in the shower.”

“Where is Andrea? Do you know anything about a surgery?” Miranda asked. She was beginning to panic.

“She’s okay,” Serena said. “Relax. She’s staying at Emily’s apartment. She made us swear not to mention it to you, so I don’t want to say any more.”

Miranda’s heart felt like it crashed to the ground. She fought to keep her tears at bay. “Would you or Emily be able to come by and look after the girls for a while?” Miranda asked.

“Sure. I’ll head over now. Give me ten minutes,” she said, hanging up.

Miranda frantically paced back and forth in the den, trying to figure out what could be wrong with the young woman that she would need surgery, and more importantly, why she would feel the need to hide it from her family.

It seemed like eternity, but when Serena arrived, she handed Miranda a key to the apartment, along with the address. Miranda quickly jumped into her taxi and headed to Emily’s place in the West Village. There wasn’t much traffic, and the short ride wasn’t nearly enough time to figure out what she wanted to say to her.

When she opened the door, she froze. Andrea was curled on the couch with a heating pad on her stomach. Miranda slowly walked closer and dropped to her knees next to the couch. She softly brushed the hair out of the young woman’s eyes, gently waking her.

Andrea’s eyes widened in fear and she instinctively pulled away from Miranda’s touch. “Wh-what are you doing here?” she stammered.

“I should be asking you the same question,” Miranda said calmly.

Andrea looked down at her hands. She couldn’t stand to see the pain and hurt in the other woman’s eyes.

“Are you okay?” Miranda asked.

“Yeah,” Andrea said, nodding.
“You owe me more than that,” she said. “You lied to me—to our girls.” Miranda turned and sat on the floor with her back to the couch. “Why…just…why?”

“I’m sorry.”

“I don’t give a damn about your apologies. What did I do to make you feel you couldn’t come to me?”

“Nothing. It’s not like that. Miranda, look. I don’t have one single reason for you. It got out of control, and then it was too late to say anything, and then it seemed like this was the best solution. I mean, we don’t have to share every single thing, right? We can each have some things we don’t share, right?”

“Not when those secrets affect our children. Andrea, what would I have told them if something happened and you didn’t make it through surgery?”

“I don’t know. I’m sorry. Look, I said I don’t have a good reason. I don’t know what else to tell you,” she said.

“How about you come home with me and then start at the very beginning?”

“Looks like I don’t have a choice,” Andrea muttered.

“Oh, you do have a choice. You always have a choice,” Miranda said.

“Ughhh,” Andrea groaned. “Seriously?”

“It’s true,” Miranda said, shrugging her shoulders. “At least you’re not in any condition to be running away today.”

“Look, Miranda—“

“No. Not here. I’m calling Roy and taking you home.”

“Fine. I just have to get my stuff out of the bathroom,” Andrea said, pushing herself off the couch.

“No, I’ll take care of that. You just sit. Oh, better yet. You can call John back, since he phoned the house earlier asking how your recovery was going,” Miranda snapped. She held her tongue as she went about the apartment, gathering Andrea’s things and tidying up a bit.

Miranda didn’t return to the living room until Roy messaged her that he was downstairs. She had so much she wanted to say to the young woman, but the overwhelming need to get Andrea home prevailed. She helped her up from the couch and down to the first floor in silence.

As Roy helped Andrea in and out of the car, Miranda wondered if she was possibly the only person in the world who didn’t know about Andrea’s surgery. Miranda helped her up to their bedroom, noticing that the babies were both down for their nap. She poked her head downstairs, gesturing that Serena was free to leave, then returned to her room, kicking off her shoes and climbing onto the bed with Andrea.

Miranda took Andrea’s hands and looked into her eyes. “Darling, I love you so much, and I’m grateful that you’re okay. I just—I love you no matter what, do you understand?”

Andrea nodded. “And I love you, too, Miranda,” she said as her eyes welled with tears. “I’m so sorry I hurt you.”
Miranda reached up and brushed away the young woman’s tears with a soft smile. “Darling, start from the beginning.”

Andrea closed her eyes and nodded. “Actually, first, can I go grab the heating pad?”

“I’ll get it. Do you need any medication?”

“I think another ibuprofen—the doctor gave me a prescription for the 800 mg tablets,” Andrea said.

“Would you like tea or anything else?”

“No, water is fine. Thank you,” she said as Miranda headed into the bathroom to retrieve the heating pad.

Once she was settled, Miranda sat indian-style on the bed next to her. “The beginning, Andrea,” she said.

Andrea could tell she was upset, but seeing that pain behind her eyes was too much. “Can you turn around or something? I can’t look at you.”

Miranda opened her mouth to protest, but quickly shut it and laid next to the young woman, resting her head on her shoulder. “Is this okay?”

Andrea reached down and squeezed her hand as she took a deep breath. “I got my period when I was nine years old—the girls’ age. By senior year of high school, it was too painful to wear a tampon. No one believed me, and I just thought all the other girls were putting up with it. My mom finally let me go to see a gynecologist, and right away she knew I had fibroids. It’s rare in young women, but possible. I later came to find out that my mother and aunts and grandmother all had fibroids, too. You can imagine how upset I was that my mother didn’t recognize my symptoms,” she said. “Oh, but that’s not what you want to hear. Right. Um, so yeah. I had surgery right after I graduated from high school. They were growing on the interior wall of my uterus, and they basically did a dilation and curettage, then cauterized. It wasn’t until a few years ago, when I went to a different doctor, that I was told I would never be able to have children due to the scarring from my previous surgery.”

Miranda turned towards Andrea and gently draped her arm across her stomach.

“So, um, yeah. I could have sued the doctors and hospital for not informing me or whatever, but I didn’t want the money. It wouldn’t change things. The fibroids basically couldn’t grow on the inside of my uterus anymore, so they started growing within the wall, and on the outside. My doctor gave me some medication to shrink them, and that helped for a while, then I moved to New York. I was feeling okay, so I didn’t bother seeing another doctor. Then, a few months ago, I started getting headaches with my period, and I was bleeding a lot more than I usually do. I tried to put it off, but I knew I needed to make an appointment. This time, she was able to do a laparoscopic myomectomy, so she just made a few tiny incisions and cut them up, then sucked it out in small pieces. So, yeah.”

“When are you going to get to the part about not telling me?” Miranda asked calmly.

“Like I said, it wasn’t a big deal, and I really didn’t want to talk about it, but then it sort of snowballed, and I thought it was too late. I thought you’d be upset with me. I thought you wouldn’t want to be bothered with this. Look, I’m fine. It’s no big deal.”

“It is a big deal, Andrea. Not only is it an ongoing health issue that you’ll face for your entire life,
but you had surgery. If you can’t share something like that…but you expect me to trust you with my daughters…”

"Your daughters. I guess I’ve already ruined it.”

“No, our daughters—our. Andrea, I’m sorry, that was not intentional.”

“Right.”

“Andrea, I am not apologizing again. You’re the one who lied to us.”

“Miranda, I’m sorry. What more do you want from me?”

“Trust?”

“I do trust you—completely. I just don’t understand why I have to tell you every single thing. Can’t I just keep something to myself? Something personal? Something that, I don’t know, you can’t use against me.”

“What? What did you just say?” Miranda hissed, sitting up. “Use against you? Clearly I was under the misguided illusion that we loved each other, but according to you, it sounds more like we’re enemies.”

“I didn’t mean it like that!” she said, raising her voice. “So, you mean, you’ve never kept anything from me?”

“Not intentionally. There’s plenty I haven’t told you, mostly because you haven’t asked. And of course, I don’t always tell you the whole story, but I’m just redacting out the boring parts. If you showed any interest whatsoever, I would tell you.”

“I find that hard to believe,” Andrea said, rolling her eyes.

“So you really think I’ve been keeping things from you? Jesus, Andrea. Two months ago I started taking mood stabilizers, and I told you before I even had the pharmacy fill the prescription. You’ve seen me at my most vulnerable—and you know there is no argument in that—and yet, you still think I’m keeping secrets?”

“I knew I couldn’t talk to you about this.”

“Oh, wait wait wait. Now this is about you feeling like you can’t talk to me? Have I ever—since we started seeing each other outside of work—said that I didn’t have time for you? Tell you I didn’t care about whatever it was you were saying? Judge you for your feelings? No. No, I haven’t,” Miranda said, shaking her finger. “I have done everything in my power to show you that I care about you. That I don’t look down on you. That each and every day I am grateful to have you in my life and in the lives of my daughters.” She shook her head and looked away for a moment. “If you don’t want this…with me…you could…no one’s forcing you to stay.”

“Miranda, no. Where are you getting that? I do want this life with you. I just, I was afraid.”

“Of what?”

Andrea shrugged. “That you wouldn’t want to put up with me. You know, if I have problems like this,” she said as she gestured towards her lower abdomen. “I’m imperfect.”

A sharp cry interrupted their conversation, and the women noticed Cate standing up in her crib on
“I’ll be right back,” Miranda said.

On the monitor, Andrea watched her pick up Cate and gently try to soothe Callie back to sleep. A few minutes later, she returned to the bedroom and climbed up onto the bed, cradling a sleepy-eyed Catherine against her chest.

“What did I say or do to make you think I wouldn’t want to ‘put up with you,’ as you say?” Miranda asked. “And how do you know I don’t already think you’re perfect?”

Andrea shrugged and shook her head. “It’s just me being insecure, forget it.”

Miranda’s eyes widened and she turned to the young woman. “Why this all of a sudden? Is it the press—did someone say something to you?”

“No, forget about it. It’s fine. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have overreacted. I shouldn’t have brought up secrets or anything. Can we just forget about it?”

“How can I forget that you had surgery without telling me? That you arranged to stay the night somewhere else so that you could hide from me? What’s next? Will you be taking another lover and keep that from me, too? Because you just want something that you can keep to yourself?”

“I could never—there is no one else. There will never be anyone else. Miranda, please don’t do this. Just let it go.”

“Tell me why you’re feeling insecure.”

Andrea was silent.

“Andrea, if you’re going to continue to keep things from me, this is as good as over. I’ve played that game many times before, and honestly, I’m too old for that. I don’t have time for the hesitation, the teasing, the jealousy. I would like to think I’ve outgrown that, and I thought you were someone who could meet me in the middle here. I want a partner to share the rest of my life with, someone I can grow old with, someone to watch our daughters grow up with. Are you or are you not that person?”

The young woman began to cry as she shook her head. “I’m not good enough. I was stupid to think I could make you happy,” she said as she took the diamond engagement ring from her finger and placed it on the nightstand.

Miranda gasped and immediately realized she took it a step too far—she practically issued Andrea an ultimatum, and that was not her intent. She set Cate down on the bed and turned over, wrapping her arms around the young woman. “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have said that. I’m a fool—please, don’t do this to me. You do make me happy, Andrea, you must know that. You are that person I see myself spending the rest of my life with. I’m the one who doesn’t deserve you, darling. Please take it back.”

Cate tried to crawl over Miranda, reaching out for Andrea. “Mama,” she said.

“Darling, please,” Miranda pleaded, kissing her on the cheek and ignoring the infant altogether.

Andrea took a deep breath and grasped one of Cate’s tiny hands. “I ran into Stephen last week at Starbucks in Manhattan. I don’t think he knew who I was until I gave the barista my name. He had some awful things to say, and I hate it, but he made me doubt some things.”
“Did he harass you? Sweetheart, I’m so sorry. He has no right to treat you like that. Why didn’t you tell me?”

Andrea rolled her eyes. “What, so your lawyer could call his lawyer? I don’t need you to fight my battles. I would have told you, but I figured you would just be too upset, and then I hadn’t decided whether I believed him or not.”

“Are you going to tell me what he said?”

“He basically said that no one would ever be good enough for you. He insinuated that you’re treating me now the same exact way you treated him just before you got married. He said that you surround yourself with people who are indebted to you to maintain the illusion of loyalty—that you know, deep down, just how insufferable you are and that you’re terrified of being alone. And then he told me you could replace me in the blink of an eye. He said, ‘Don’t even think about telling me that Miranda would never cheat on you, because there are two nine-month-olds as proof she’s done it before.’” Andrea brought her hands up to cover her face. “I don’t want to believe him. I know he’s an asshole, but he got to me. I want to believe that I’m different, that what we have is different, but I can’t think of a single thing you could do to prove it to me.”

“Andrea, I can promise you that I never treated Stephen like this. Even in the beginning, I never hugged or kissed him simply because I wanted to. I never snuggled beside him because I liked the way he smelled. I don’t even know what he smelled like before I gave him a bottle of Ralph Lauren cologne for his birthday,” Miranda said, sitting up and anxiously glancing at the monitor. Callie was awake and jumping up and trying to climb out of her crib. “Of course, we got along better when we were first together, but—ask Caroline and Cassidy. It was entirely different. I have to go get Callie before she breaks that crib,” she said, heading to the door. “Darling, whatever you want, say the word and I’ll do it.”

A few minutes later, she returned to the room carrying Callie and kicking two bouncers through the doorway. She fastened Callie in hers, then came to gather Cate and fasten her inside as well. Once they were settled, she crawled next to Andrea again and tightly wrapped her arms around her. “Andrea, I love you so much,” she whispered.

“If I asked you to leave Runway, would you?”

“Yes,” Miranda replied without a moment’s hesitation. “Do you want me to?”

The young woman shook her head. “If I asked you to, uh, dye your hair dark brown, would you?”

“Yes—want me to call Tiffani?”

Andrea shook her head. “If I asked you to marry me today, would you?”

“Yes,” Miranda said, smiling brightly. “But technically, we wouldn’t be able to obtain the license until Monday at 8:30 AM, and then we’d have to wait twenty-four hours to officially marry. If there were a way to make it happen today, I would. We could fly to Vegas tonight if you’re feeling up to it?”

Andrea turned and looked her in the eye. “Seriously? You’d do that? I mean, how do you know all the details?” She couldn’t imagine Miranda had bothered with all that in any of her previous marriages.

“I think about it a lot, and finally looked up the process for New York,” Miranda said with a shrug.

“You think about marriage in general or marrying me?”
Miranda rolled her eyes. “Marrying you. The first time I really thought about it was when I was with the girls in Riviera Maya for Christmas last year. I didn’t look up the details until after we started seeing each other, naturally,” she said.

“Really?”

“Well right now would be a very inconvenient time to tell a lie, don’t you think? Actually, you can probably look in my calendar book. I scribbled down the address of the City Clerk’s office, and I have a document pouch in the top drawer of my desk with all of my finalized divorce decrees.”

“You would seriously go to the City Clerk’s office first thing Monday morning?”

Miranda gently stroked the young woman’s cheek. “Darling, I’d hire a private jet to Vegas this very minute.”

“Wow—”

“Yes. Is that what you want? To get married?”

She shook her head. “I don’t think so. I mean, I haven’t thought about it too much. I don’t want it to be like this. Maybe some rainy spring day in the Hamptons when the girls are old enough to remember it and not cry through it. And also after I make enough of a name for myself that no one will accuse Andrea Priestly of using her wife to get ahead.”

“You would take my name?” Miranda asked, softly brushing her cheek.

“Of course—I mean, if you’d let me. I guess I should have asked first.”

“Darling, the girls and I would be honored,” she said, leaning closer. “Can I kiss you?”

“Are we okay now?” Andrea asked, gently placing her palm against Miranda’s chest. “This all started because you were upset with me, and then somehow I upset you and…are we okay?”

“Apology accepted, and I’m sorry for overreacting. I’m still learning how these personal conflicts work.”

“I understand, and appreciate you recognizing that this works differently than a situation at the magazine,” Andrea said.

“So, can I…?” Miranda asked, patiently hovering over her lips.

“Yes, please,” Andrea said, quickly closing the distance between them.

Miranda devoured the young woman’s lips, eagerly searching out her tongue and staking her claim inside her mouth. She pulled away and softly traced the features of her face. “When John called earlier,” she said as she peppered her face with tiny kisses, “I felt like I couldn’t breathe—I was terrified, and betrayed. The anguish was just…oh god, I never want to feel that again. My heart won’t stand it.”

“I’m so sorry,” Andrea said, wrapping her arms tightly around the woman.

Andrea healed well after her surgery, and again began taking daily medication to prevent future growths. Miranda was grateful that it wasn’t as serious a medical condition as she feared, and despite wanting to talk to Andrea more about the fact that she knew she could never have children, she was afraid to broach the subject. She knew Andrea was waiting for her to reveal the details of
the babies’ father, but she also knew the young woman would never ask. It was as if, by holding onto that one private bit of information, she was leaving room for a wisp of insecurity. She wasn’t proud of her actions, but she feared her relationship would dissolve if it were any other way.

The twins’ first birthday was a small, private affair. For some reason, the press had taken a renewed interest in the young Priestly women, and the last thing she wanted was to have her family’s celebration under the scrutiny of the media. As she did several months ago, she included a few candid photos of the girls with their birthday cake and presents next to her Editor’s Note, as a sort of reward for those who paid the premium for a quality magazine like Runway.

It was a busy summer with outings and trips and visits and photo shoots and picnics nearly every weekend. Before she knew it, her family was again gathering at her home to share a Thanksgiving feast. While everyone was still sitting in the dining room, Mary Ann joined Miranda in the kitchen and helped her to load the dishwashers.

“I need to ask you something,” Miranda said nervously.

“Yes, it’s just, I’m having trouble finding a birthday gift for Andrea this year. I want to do something more meaningful. Last year, I planned to have Emily and Serena babysit so Andrea and I could go out for a while, but Andrea wasn’t feeling well, so we ordered in and just had a very quiet night. I want to do something special this time.”

“Hmm, I see. Knowing Andy, she would appreciate any gift that you put thought into—it doesn’t have to be fancy or expensive.”

“I know. Cassidy and Caroline are making her cards, and I think they have something planned from the babies, too. I’m just at a loss.”

“Well I think you’ve given her more than she’s ever wanted. Maybe instead of giving her something, you could do something for her to make her feel special and cared for, like a relaxing bubble bath or something,” Mary Ann said.

“She doesn’t take bath alo—” Miranda caught herself, blushing furiously, and focused on the dish she was holding in her hands. “She prefers not to bathe alone.”

“Oh, well…um, you know, just something that shows her how much you think about her,” she said. “I’m going to see if anyone needs anything,” she said, heading back into the dining room.

Miranda closed the dishwasher and leaned against the counter. “Of course!” she said to herself. She had the perfect gift in mind and she would easily be able to prepare it in the next four days.

On November 30, Andrea’s twenty-seventh birthday, Cara arrived at the townhouse earlier than usual and took care of the twins’ morning routine so that Miranda could spend some time with the young woman. Miranda didn’t plan to head to the office until the afternoon, and she talked to John and arranged for Andrea to work a half-day as well. At the time Miranda’s alarm would typically go off, she quietly snuck out of bed and into the bathroom, turning the shower on so Andrea would not be suspicious. A short time later, Miranda turned the shower off, and emerged from the bathroom in new, hot pink lace and satin lingerie from La Perla, complete with sky-high stilettos. She carried a single cupcake on a plate, piled high with frosting.

“Darling,” Miranda said, sitting next to the young woman. “Time to wake up, sleeping beauty.”

Andrea groaned and tried to pull the covers over her face.
Miranda dipped her finger in the icing and smeared a tiny bit on her lips before leaning over and kissing Andrea gently. “Birthday girl,” she whispered, “you’ll have to be awake to receive your present.”

Andrea’s tongue licked the remaining frosting from her lips and her eyes opened wide.

“Happy birthday, sweetheart,” Miranda said, kissing her again.

“Thank you,” she said, pushing herself up against the pillows. “What are you—oh god, fuck, that’s so hot,” she said. “Is that for me—I mean, you’re not leaving the house in that, are you?”

Miranda grinned. “It’s entirely for you, don’t worry. Now, how would you like your cupcake?”

Andrea’s eyes widened.

“I can tie you to the bed and feed it to you,” she whispered, peppering kisses along Andrea’s wrist. “Or, you can tie me to the bed and eat it off of me.”

“That sounds delicious,” Andrea said, “but I don’t want you tied up.”

“Whatever the birthday girl wants,” Miranda said.

“Wait—will you—will you just stand up and walk around in those heels for a second?”

Miranda winked at her and set the cupcake down on the nightstand as she paced back and forth a few times, modeling her lingerie in the insanely high heels. “Shall I strip, too?” she asked, sticking her thumb inside the garter belt.

“No, not yet. Come here,” she said, patting the bed next to her.

Miranda crawled next to her and was happy to see how pleased she seemed to be. Miranda reached for the cupcake on the nightstand and pressed it against her lips, creating a trail of icing down her neck, across her breasts, and down her stomach. She could hear Andrea’s breath hitch at the gesture. Gently lifting her hand up and squeezing her legs together, she crumbled the rest of the cupcake over her stomach and pelvis. With her sticky hand, she reached up and stroked Andrea’s cheek, slipping her fingers into the woman’s mouth.

In a low, quiet, incredibly sexy voice, Miranda began to slowly sing: “Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, An-dre-a, happy birthday to you.”

“Oh, Miranda, this is so fucking sexy,” she said, gently straddling her and placing her hands on either side of Miranda’s head. She bent down and began licking the frosting from her neck, traveling down towards her cleavage, moaning as she licked and sucked on the woman’s perfect skin.

She pushed the padded bra cups down for a moment so she could palm the editor’s breasts and give them each the attention they deserved. She licked and sucked and bit the hard nubs, eliciting deep, guttural moans from the woman that reverberated through her chest.

“Jesus, Miranda. this is the best birthday present ever,” Andrea said, moving upwards once again to kiss her on the lips. “My two favorite things in the whole wide world.”

“What’s that?” Miranda asked.

“You and frosting.”
Miranda laughed a full, hearty laugh, and kissed her softly. “Darling, I don’t think you finished your cupcake.”

“Saving the best for last,” Andrea said as she dragged her tongue across Miranda’s stomach. Most of the crumbs had already fallen to the sheets, except where they pooled at her apex. “Mmmm, ohhh, Miranda,” Andrea mumbled as she licked at the crumbs.

Miranda felt her gently pushing her legs apart, so she complied, letting Andrea’s tongue swipe her folds and circle her clit long enough to stave off the orgasm that had been building for the past twenty minutes.

Deciding the young woman had enough for the moment, Miranda laced her fingers in her hair and gently drew her upwards, kissing her and tasting a mix of herself and cupcake on the woman’s tongue.

“Darling, there’s another present,” Miranda said, pointing to the dresser. “And while you’re up, strip for me.”

Andrea grinned and eagerly jumped from the bed, rocking her hips and swaying her body as she pulled off her silk camisole and boy shorts. “This?” she asked, pointing to a black shoebox.

Miranda nodded. “If you don’t like it, it’s okay,” she said. “I just thought—now would be a good time, I mean, if…”

Andrea gasped when she took the lid off the box. “A Feeldoe?! You’re okay with that?”

Miranda smiled when she saw how Andrea’s face lit up. “Of course, I’m the one who bought it for you,” she said, rolling her eyes. Miranda propped herself on her elbows and watched Andrea stroke the smooth purple silicone. “Come here,” she said.

Andrea obeyed and climbed onto the bed, straddling the woman while she held the object in her hand.

“Darling,” Miranda said, placing her hands on the woman’s slender hips, “come closer,” she said, tugging her forward. She gently pressed her lips to Andrea’s slick folds, slipping her tongue into her hot center.

“Oh god,” Andrea moaned, pulling back.

Miranda looked up, her eyes full of concern. “Are you okay? Was that painful?”

“No, no, it felt good—too good. One second longer and I, well, I want to come when I’m inside of you,” she said, leaning down and kissing Miranda softly.

Miranda wrapped her fingers around the dildo in Andrea’s hand. “Let me,” she said. She swirled her tongue around the “pony” end and reached down, parting the young woman’s folds and sliding it into place. “How’s that?”

Andrea straightened and thrust her hips forward. “You tell me,” she said, grinning.

Miranda gently traced her fingers down the appendage, trembling with anticipation. “Oh, please,” she gasped as Andrea slid further down her body. Her legs instinctively wrapped around her waist as Andrea thrust forward. “Uhhhh!” she choked. The sudden thrust was unexpected—and deep.

Andrea pressed a kiss to Miranda’s temple, then another to her forehead.
“Wait,” Miranda gasped, reaching out to still the young woman’s hips. “Wait, just give me a second,” she said. “I’m not—you know—used to it so deep.”

“Oh, god, I’m sorry,” Andrea said, blushing. “I got carried away.” She pressed a kiss to Miranda’s closed eyelids and reached down, unclasping the woman’s bra and kneading her breasts.

Slowly, Miranda opened her eyes and nodded.

Andrea bent down, sucking on the skin of Miranda’s neck as she began rocking her hips, thrusting in and out of the woman, grinding against her clitoris. She could feel Miranda’s pulse racing. Her tiny whimpers faded into quiet gasps and chuffs. The pale skin of her chest grew pink with exertion, and she could feel the tendons tightening in her neck as her head went backwards. Andrea gently traced her fingers down Miranda’s neck and shoulders, watching as the woman beneath her parted her lips ever so slightly before her body melted into the mattress.

The sight was intensely erotic. Never before had she been able to watch the woman come undone quite like this. Within seconds, her own orgasm washed over her and she collapsed shamelessly onto the older woman.

After a few minutes, Miranda brushed the brunette’s hair out of her eyes and softly cupped her cheek. “Happy birthday, Andrea,” she said quietly. “I hope it’s been a good birthday so far.”

Andrea hummed with pleasure and turned to roll over onto her side. Miranda quickly reached down and guided the object out, tossing it aside. Andrea lay on her back next to the woman and began giggling.

“What is it?” Miranda asked, propping herself up on one elbow.

“There are so many crumbs in the sheets,” she said. “You know, you wasted a perfectly good cupcake.”

“Well, I hardly think it was a waste,” Miranda said, grinning. “And for your information, there are five more downstairs. One for each of us tonight, and Cate and Callie can share.”

“Oh shit,” Andrea said. “The girls. We’re all going to be late.” she quickly tried to sit up, but Miranda grabbed her wrist, stopping her.

“I arranged for Cara to come early today,” Miranda said. She looked over at the clock. “Cassidy and Caroline are already off to school, and Cara’s downstairs with the babies. They’re not expecting me until this afternoon, and I informed John that you would need the morning off for an appointment. It’s all taken care of.”

“Wow…thank you.”

“You’re welcome. I love you, darling. I hope this birthday is better than last year’s.”

“Miranda, last year’s was great because I shared it with you and the girls. I mean, yes, this year is infinitely better so far, but it’s not a competition. I love that you put so much thought and preparation into this. I love you.”

“I have one more present for you, but I’d rather give it to you after we’ve showered. So, will you take a shower with me?”

Andrea grinned. “Since you don’t have anywhere to be for at least three hours, I’d love to.”
Nearly an hour later, Miranda stepped out of the bathroom, wrapped in her bathrobe. She carefully stripped the sheets from the bed and threw them in the corner by the door. Andrea soon followed, her hair and body each wrapped in a towel.

“The girls have something for you that they’ll give you tonight, but here,” Miranda said, handing her a larger box with a white bow. “I wanted to give you something that shows how much I think of you each and every day. You are a permanent fixture in my life, Andrea Sachs, and I never, ever want you to doubt that.”

“This…this is your date book,” Andrea said, pulling the leather-bound notebook from the box. “I thought you keep all of these at Runway, in case we ever need to reference something?”

“Well, maybe one of the assistants misplaced the 2008 calendar,” she said. “Open it.”

Andrea unfastened the leather strap and opened it, carefully flipping through the pages. Miranda had a strict rule about only using fine tip black ink pens, particularly in her calendar. As she flipped the pages, she noticed that every page had “A” or “Andrea” traced over in red ink a few times.

“I had to flip back for something last week, and I realized just how many times a day I was scribbling down something to tell you, something about you, sometimes just your name…or even just some hearts in the margin. The other night, I went through and traced your name—it’s in there over one thousand times. I lost track,” Miranda said, shrugging. “I will warn you that there were a few days when I was a little frustrated about something, so don’t get upset. I just didn’t think you’d appreciate a redacted version—it probably wouldn’t have the same effect.”

Andrea closed the journal and took a deep breath. “Miranda,” she said with a shaky voice. “This means more to me than I think you’ll ever know.” She reached over and wrapped her arms around the woman. “Thank you.”

The next two years were the happiest years of any of their lives—Cassidy and Caroline included. Miranda and Andrea were more comfortable in their roles, both professionally and personally, and everything just seemed more relaxed—rather, Miranda was more relaxed, so everyone around her could take a deep breath.

Cate and Callie had just turned three years old, and they celebrated with a huge party in the Hamptons. Andrea invited some of her cousins and their kids, and Miranda let Caroline and Cassidy invite a few of their friends from school, too. In total, there were about fifty guests, though Miranda and Andrea spent most of their time chasing after their daughters, so they didn’t have the opportunity to say hello.

The following morning, the three-year-olds woke them early, crawling into their bed. “Moom,” Callie whined, “you said pancakes today—and strawberries. Did you forget?”

Andrea hugged and kissed her daughter. “Good morning, my love bug,” she said. “And no, I did not forget. I was just so tired from your big birthday party yesterday that I thought we could sleep in a little bit, okay?”

Callie frowned and crossed her arms over her chest, turning to Miranda for support. “Mama?”

“Oh, sweetie, I’m sooo tired. I want pancakes, too, but I think I will need at least one hundred kisses from each of you before I can get up,” Miranda said.

“Me too?” Catherine asked.
“Oh yes, I’m verrrry tired,” Miranda said.

Both girls started kissing her cheeks over and over, pausing every few minutes to ask whether that was one hundred yet. They erupted in giggled when they bumped heads, and all the chatter apparently woke the others.

“Andy, is she making them give her a hundred kisses again?” Caroline asked.

Andrea pressed her finger to her lips and gestured for her to come sit on the bed.

“Where’s everyone else?”

“Grandma Helen and Grandma Mary Ann are downstairs making breakfast for everyone.”

“Oh okay. Did your friends have a good time yesterday?”

“Yeah. Thanks again for letting Julia stay the night with us. She hates when her dad forgets about her like that. Her mom texted her that she was on her way and would be here by ten.”

“She’s always welcome to stay with us—make sure she knows that. School nights, weekends, whatever,” Andrea said. “I better get up so I can say hello to her mother.” She turned to the twins, still showering Miranda with kisses. “Almost there—three more! Ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one hundred!” she said.

“Yay! Pancakes!” Callie shouted, climbing off the bed and racing downstairs.

“Wait for me!” Catherine said, following her.

“I’ve got them,” Caroline said, rushing after them and helping them to slowly walk down the stairs. At least the stairs in the townhouse were carpeted. These were slippery hardwood, and sometimes they needed a little reminder to go slow.

“Were you going to just let them do that all morning?” Andrea asked, curling up next to the other woman.

“Mm-hmm,” Miranda said, grinning. “You could pick up where they left off, you know.”

Andrea leaned over and kissed her lovingly. “Helen and my mom are apparently feeding everyone downstairs, and Julia’s mother is on her way.”

“Oh, I forgot…that poor girl. I think it was always my fear that I would be one of those parents. James has been very good about that—actually, we’ve both worked really hard to make sure that they always understood they were our number one priority. And then, these past few years with your presence…the fact that you not only put them before yourself, but before me, too…I’m just eternally grateful that they will never know that kind of hurt.”

“Oh course not. I told Caroline that Julia is always welcome to stay with us. You don’t mind, do you?”

“No, but one of us should be down there when her mother comes,” Miranda said, getting up. “You take your time. I can get ready in five minutes.” She grabbed a white cotton sundress from the closet and a few minutes later, emerged from the bathroom looking gorgeous as ever. Miranda winked at the young woman before heading downstairs.

After the birthday party, Helen decided to stay in New York with them for a few weeks. One night
when they were sitting around the dining room table enjoying Helen’s homemade fried chicken, Cassidy turned and whispered something in Andrea’s ear.

“You’ll have to ask, sweetie,” Andrea said.

“Cassidy, is everything alright?” Miranda asked.

“Yeah, Mom. It’s fine.”

Miranda pursed her lips and stared at her.

“Okay. Um, there’s this concert coming up, and it’s at the Garden, and it’s sold out. A bunch of our friends tried to get tickets and couldn’t…Jack made this stupid comment that you wouldn’t even be able to get tickets.”

Miranda frowned. There was nothing she despised more than the girls’ classmates mocking her in front of them at school. She always insisted that her daughters should never be put in the position to defend their mother to their peers. “Darling, do you want to go to the concert?”

“Yes, we would love to go,” Caroline said, interrupting.

Miranda rolled her eyes. “Is this just because of what that boy said? I hadn’t heard you mention anything before.”

“Mom, it’s One Direction. We’ve basically spent all summer listening to them and watching their videos online,” Cassidy said, rolling her eyes right back. “Of course we want to go.”

“Actually, Miranda, Cassidy was telling me about the concert a few weeks ago, but if I remember correctly, it falls on Labor Day weekend and that’s when the four girls are going to Boston to visit Grandma Helen and Grandpa George,” Andrea said.

“Yeah,” Cassidy said with a shrug. “That’s why I didn’t say anything. We already had plans.”

“Well don’t miss a concert on account of me and your grandpa. You can visit us anytime!” Helen said.

Cassidy’s eyes lit up, and she quickly turned to look at Miranda, then Andrea, then back to Miranda. “Mom?”

“I can’t make any promises now,” Miranda said, “but I will make a few calls tonight before I go to bed and see if they can’t fit just two more people into that sold-out arena.”

The girls erupted in squeals, which Cate and Callie instantly wanted to join in on. Andrea leaned over to Miranda. “We live in a zoo,” she said.

“Mmm, yes,” Miranda replied, taking a sip of her wine as she watched her children interact. “The primate house, I believe.”

The following day, Miranda arrived home at 5:45 PM, just as Andrea was climbing the steps of the porch. “Andrea, help carry these,” she said, handing her a few gift bags as she climbed out of the town car.

“What’s all this?”

“I got us tickets for the concert—you, me, and the two girls. But I want to tease them a little bit, so just go along. Plus, I can’t leave Cate and Callie out,” she said, walking up the front steps. “Girls,”
she called. “Come here, I brought presents for you!”

Miranda cringed as they heard the stampede coming down the stairs.

“Mmm, elephants,” Andrea said.

“I was thinking more like rhinoceros,” she said, gasping as Cate came running for her, nearly tackling her with her hug. “Hi my darling, did you have a good day?”

“You know, Mom usually brings us presents when she’s trying to apologize for something,” Caroline whispered before they reached the first floor. “I bet she couldn’t get those tickets.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Cassidy said, shrugging. “Hey, Mom, Andy.”

“Hi Bobbsey, here you go,” she said, handing both her and her sister a bag. She turned around and handed Andrea a bag as well, and she had two left.

“Mama, who is that for?” Catherine asked.

“Well, one is for Grandma, and the other is for me.”

“Grandma went to the store with Cara. Can we open them?” Caroline asked.

“Yes, go ahead.”

“I got a purse like Mommy’s!” Callie shouted. Indeed, it was a miniature pink Chanel quilted bag.

“I got one, too!” Catherine said, pulling out a similar bag in purple.

Caroline and Cassidy both pulled out white screen printed One Direction shirts, and Miranda couldn’t help but notice they looked inside the bag to see if there was anything else.

“Thanks, Mom, this is cool,” Cassidy said quietly.

“Hey look, I got a t-shirt like that, too, but it’s black,” Andrea said. “Miranda, what’d you get?”

“Hmm, let’s see,” she said, digging through the bag. “I also got a black t-shirt, and, oh, just four tickets for the concert on September 5th…front row,” she said, pulling them out and grinning.

“Mom!!!!” Cassidy cried, running up to her and giving her a giant hug and kiss. “Thank you, thank you! This is so cool!!”

Caroline also thanked her, then asked, “Wait, so you’re both coming with us?”

Miranda shrugged. “I’m presuming Andrea is coming…”

“Hell y—I mean, heck yes!” she said, giggling.

“Mama, what ‘bout us?” Catherine asked, tugging on Miranda’s dress.

Miranda kneeled on the floor to address her daughter. “Sweetheart, concerts are for grown-ups, and on special occasions, teenagers. You and your sister Callie are too little.”

“What’s a concert?” Callie asked, turning to Cassidy.

“A concert is when a band plays music in front of tons and tons of people. It’s really loud, and it can hurt your ears, especially little kid ears,” she said sweetly.
“And girls, I’m sorry to inform you, but you will be wearing earplugs. I’ll have my assistant pick up some of those transparent ones so that no one will notice,” Miranda said.

“Thanks, Mom. Really, this is awesome. Wait—are you and Andy going to wear those shirts?” Caroline asked.

“Well, I’m not going to wear this,” Miranda said, gesturing at the silk Prabal Gurung sheath dress she was wearing. “Plus, I think we’ll all have a better time if we’re less conspicuous, you know? We don’t want ‘Miranda Priestly Attends Concert with Offspring’ to be the morning headline,” she added.

“Can we tell our friends now?” Cassidy asked? “Jack is going to freak out.”

“Yes, sweetheart, but make it quick. We’re sitting down for dinner in about fifteen minutes,” Miranda said.

On Friday, September 4th, Miranda took a vacation day and rode with her youngest daughters to Boston, where they would be staying with their grandparents for the weekend. It would be the first time they were spending the night somewhere that wasn’t home, and without Miranda, Andrea, Caroline, or Cassidy.

The previous weekend, they arranged for their four girls to have a “sleepover” at Emily’s apartment, and they did fine. Still, she was nervous, and she knew Andrea was, too. Helen reassured her that they would be absolutely fine, and that she and George and their golden retriever Bucky would be more than enough distraction. Helen wanted them to stay for an entire week, but Miranda thought it best to play it by ear. She fully expected to be driving out to Boston early Sunday morning to pick them up.

It was strangely quiet that evening at the townhouse. Cassidy and Caroline were upstairs making sure they knew every word to every song before the concert tomorrow, and Miranda and Andrea were curled up on the couch in the study. It was their favorite position: Andrea sitting at one end of the couch with her feet up on the coffee table and her computer in her lap, Miranda on the opposite end of the couch with her iPad or the Book, her knees bent and her toes resting on Andrea’s thigh (or, if it was cold, tucked under Andrea’s leg). They have—on more than one occasion—fallen asleep in that position. Tonight, though, they took advantage of the quiet and decided to turn in early and watch a movie in bed. As much as she loved when the girls came in their bed to cuddle, she was extremely glad the co-sleeping arrangement ended years ago.

The next morning, a knock on their bedroom door woke them. “Mom? Andy? Can we come in? Are you decent?”

“Yes, come in,” Miranda said, sitting up in bed. “What’s wrong? We were still asleep.”

Cassidy looked over at the TV and noticed the DVD player screensaver was on the screen. “Did you guys fall asleep during the movie again?”

“I think I fell asleep before it started,” Andrea admitted. “What time is it?”

“It’s 8:58,” Caroline said. “Grandpa emailed us earlier and said the girls slept well, and that they were going to try and FaceTime us at later.”

“Okay, and…?” Miranda asked.

“It’s quiet here without them. I kind of miss them,” Cassidy said.
“Alright, you two, come on up here,” Miranda said, lifting the covers. She and Andrea learned years ago to always be wearing pajamas in the morning since more than half the time, one of their children ended up in their bedroom before they were out of bed. “Is there anything special you want to do today before the concert?” Miranda asked.

Later that night, Roy dropped the four ladies off at the concert after waiting in traffic for nearly thirty minutes just to get to the entrance. Luckily, Cassidy supplied Roy with a One Direction CD to play, informing everyone that this was the perfect opportunity to “get into the spirit.”

“Girls, are you sure you’re okay with me wearing this?” Miranda asked before they stepped out of the car. “I just didn’t want to draw unnecessary attention.”

“Mom, it’s fine. We won’t have fun if people keep trying to get a photo of you, so it’s good. Really.”

Miranda sighed, looking at herself in the mirror and adjusting her wig one last time.

“Come on, Miri, let’s go,” Andrea said, opening the door. Miranda just shook her head and followed them out. They were led down to a standing-room only area near the stage and given lanyards to wear around their neck and display their ticket at all times.

Within about thirty minutes, the opening act came on, and by 8:30, One Direction took the stage. Andrea and Miranda stood behind the girls, and it was such a delight to see how excited they were at the entire experience. At one point, Harry reached his hand out to the crowd and they were both screaming at the top of their lungs because he touched their hands. Miranda smiled at her daughters.

About two hours into the show, the lights went down and they quietly began playing the chords to one of their most popular songs—also one that was playing nonstop for the past few days in the Priestly home. While Caroline and Cassidy sang at the top of their lungs because he touched their hands, Miranda reached her arm around Andrea and slipped her hand in the younger woman’s back pocket.

She leaned closer and began to sing into her ear: “Everyone else in the room can see it—everyone else but you…Baby, you light up my world like nobody else. The way that you flip your hair gets me overwhelmed, but when you smile at the ground it ain’t hard to tell, you don’t know—oh—oh, you don’t know you’re beautiful.”

Andrea pulled Miranda closer and gently kissed her on the cheek, picking up where she left off: “If only you saw what I can see, you’ll understand why I want you so desperately. Right now I’m looking at you and I can’t believe you don’t know—oh—oh, you don’t know you’re beautiful. Oh—oh—oh, that’s what makes you beautiful.”

“Andrea,” Miranda whispered, tracing her finger over the brunette’s lips. She quickly closed the distance between them, hungrily kissing the young woman while the arena full of screaming teenage girls sang along with the song.

After a while, Andrea pulled away and leaned against Miranda’s shoulder, gently swaying to the rest of the music. When the concert was over, Cassidy and Caroline thanked Miranda again and again. Andrea pulled out her phone to make sure she didn’t have any missed calls or texts from Helen, and she gasped as she opened her email.

“What?” Miranda asked.

“Um…so, that wig worked. No one recognized you,” Andrea said, handing her phone over. “But
they definitely have pictures of us kissing. Leslie just sent us this.”

“What’s wrong with that? They’ve put pictures of you kissing in the trash papers before,” Caroline said. “We still had an awesome time, Mom.”

“Sweetheart,” Miranda said, shaking her head. “The photographers didn’t recognize me, so they think Andrea was kissing someone else,” she said. She watched as finally understood what she was saying.

“Can’t you just tell them it was you? That Andy wasn’t cheating?” Cassidy said.

“No, Cass, it doesn’t really work that way. They don’t care what we have to say. If we try to get involved, they’ll make it into a really big deal. I’m just glad you two aren’t in the photo,” Miranda said. “I’m going to send Leslie a quick note back, explaining the situation. Let her deal with it.”

“Mom, couldn’t you just start wearing that wig to work and stuff? Then they’d feel stupid for not noticing your new hair?” Caroline asked.

“Or…this could be a good time to dye your hair dark brown,” Andrea said, wagging her eyebrows. “I seem to remember a conversation...”

Miranda chuckled as she shook her head. “I’ll think about it. But if I do anything, it will only be semi-permanent. I don’t want to damage my hair—then I will for sure be wearing a wig!”

“I love you, you know that, right?” Andrea asked.

Miranda smiled. “I do know that, but I’ll never tire of hearing it, darling.”

Two years passed.

“Girls, we’re going to be late. Let’s go,” Miranda said.

“Coming!” Callie called from the top of the stairs. “Sissy, c’mon, Mom’s waiting.”

“Stop calling me that!” Cate shrieked, running past her sister and down the stairs. “Moooomm, Callie keeps calling me ‘Sissy’ and everyone at school is going to laugh at me,” she whined as she ran up to Miranda.

Miranda bent down and hugged her daughter, smoothing out her tweed Ralph Lauren dress. “Sweetheart, you look so grown-up today,” she said. She reached up and fixed the barrette that was keeping her bangs out of her eyes. When Callie joined them in the foyer, Miranda continued, “Your sister would never call you that at school, darling. That’s a special nickname just between us here at home.”

“I don’t like it,” Cate said, stomping her foot and folding her arms across her chest.

“Catherine, what do I call your big sisters?”

She shrugged.

“Callie?”
“‘Bobbsey,’” Callie said, “right Mom?”

“Yes. I’ve been calling them ‘Bobbsey’ for fifteen years. They never liked it. If you’ve noticed, they still get a little annoyed when I use it,” she said. “But I would never call them that to embarrass them in front of their friends.”

“Cassy probably can’t hear you because of her headphones,” Cate said.

Miranda smiled. She was right. Cassidy was glued to her iPhone, always with her headphones in. “You know what I mean, sweetie.”

“Then why do you still say it if you know they don’t like it?” Cate asked.

“Because I think somewhere deep inside,” she explained, pressing her finger to Cate’s chest, “it reminds them how much I love them. Just like your nicknames are special, too.” She pulled her daughter in for a hug, then stood back up. “Okay? Are we all set?”

Cate nodded. “Yeah. It’s okay if you call me ‘Sissy,’ but I don’t want Callie to,” she said.

“Okay, my darlings, we really need to go. I don’t want you to be late for your first day of school,” Miranda said. “Cate, where’s your backpack, honey?”

“Oh!” she said, running into the kitchen. Miranda turned and looked at Callie who already had her bag on her back. “‘Kay, ready!” she said, returning with her pink backpack.

“Well, let’s go. Mr. Roy is driving us today,” Miranda said as she held the front door open for the girls.

“Are you going to work after you take us?” Callie asked.

“Yes, I’m going to Runway and Mommy Andrea is going to pick you up,” Miranda said. Her phone began to ring as she helped the girls to fasten their seat belts.

“That’s Mommy’s music, isn’t it?” Callie asked. “Can I talk to her?”

“We’ll all say hello,” Miranda said, answering and putting it on speakerphone. “Hi, darling.”

“Hi, Mom!” they both shouted at once.

“Well, hello, three of my favorite people. Are you on your way to school?”

“Yes!”

“I hope you have a good day. I’ll be there at 3:30 to pick you up. Love you!”

“Love you too, Mom.”

“Love you! See you later.”

Miranda turned off the speakerphone and held it up to her ear. “Okay, as you can hear, they’re very eager to start Kindergarten,” Miranda said.

“Hmm, and how are you holding up?” Andrea asked.

“What? What do you mean? I’m fine.”
“Okay. Good.”

Miranda could practically hear the other woman’s smirk on the other end of the line. “I’ll have you know that I am also very excited for our girls to be starting school. They’re going to learn so much and make so many friends,” Miranda said.

“Okay, okay. Please try to hold it together in front of the other parents,” Andrea said. “Call me when you get back to the car.”

“I will. Talk to you later. Love you.”

“Love you, too. Bye,” Andrea said, ending the call.

They rode in silence the next few miles until Roy pulled into the line of cars dropping students off. He got out and opened the door for the girls, giving them each a high five as they exited the car.

“See ya later, kiddos!”

“See ya!”

Miranda reached down and straightened out Callie’s hair as she led her into the school.

A table was setup just inside the entrance for all kindergarten students to check-in. Miss Waugh, the Admissions Coordinator, stood and reached for Miranda’s hand. “Miranda, good morning,” she said, shaking it firmly.

“Hello, Miss Waugh,” Miranda said.

“And you must be Callie…and Catherine Priestly, right?”

Both girls smiled and nodded.

Miss Waugh picked up two name tags from her desk and handed them to each of the girls to drape around their neck. The girls exchanged a quick glance, then switched name tags.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” Miss Waugh said.

“Girls,” Miranda warned.

They quickly switched back and slipped the proper name tag over their head. “Sorry,” Cate murmured. “Yeah, sorry, Mom,” Callie said.

Miranda bent down and adjusted the name tag so it wasn’t interfering with Callie’s hair or the collar on her shirt. “Be good today. Be nice to the other girls and boys, and listen to your teachers. Mommy will pick you up. I love you, sweetheart,” she said, kissing her softly on the cheek, then wiping the smudge of her lipstick off.

Miss Waugh gestured for Callie to begin walking towards their classroom.

“And you,” Miranda said, hugging and kissing her other daughter gently. “You be good, too. Don’t be whiney, and please be nice to your teachers. I will see you when I get home from work tonight. I love you, baby girl,” she whispered, kissing her one more time on the top of her head.

“Bye, Mom,” Cate said, waving as she walked over towards where Miss Waugh was standing.

“Have a good day at work, too!”

Miranda clasped her hand over her mouth and waved as her babies headed down the hallway into
their Kindergarten classroom. Once they were out of sight, she walked back to the car, dialing Andrea on her phone.

“I take it you dropped them off?” Andrea said, answering the call.

“They didn’t even want me to stay,” Miranda said, sniffling. “They just went off with this woman they’ve never met.”

“Don’t worry. We’ve just been telling them how much fun school is—this is how we wanted them to react, right? We didn’t want to be those parents whose kids are crying for their mothers.”

“But Andrea, I want them to cry for me. They’re so grown-up,” Miranda said. “It seems like just yesterday they were babies, and we were bringing them home from the hospital. They needed us for everything, and now, they…they don’t.”

“Miranda, they will need us for the rest of their lives. Look at Care and Cass. They’re fifteen years old, and I think they need us more now than they did five years ago.”

Miranda didn’t say anything.

“Are you okay? Do you want me to come meet you somewhere?” Andrea asked after a minute.

“Can I swing by? Are you busy?” Miranda asked as she pressed the button to lower the privacy glass.

“I’m free for another hour and twenty minutes.”

Miranda quickly instructed Roy to head to The Mirror, and she pulled out her mirror, touching up her eye makeup.

Andrea met her in the lobby and walked her back up to her office, which was about half the size of Miranda’s at Runway, but much cozier. Miranda took a seat on the oversized chair while Andrea shut and locked her office door. “I have some tea if you’d like,” she said, holding out a cup and saucer.

“Thanks,” Miranda replied, reaching a shaky hand out for the teacup.

Andrea sat next to her in the cozy chair, gently running her hands along the woman’s shoulders and back. “So, I’m going to leave early today. Roy is going to drop off the Range Rover later this afternoon, and then at three, I’ll head over to Dalton to pick up the twins. From there, we’ll pickup Caroline and Cassidy, and then hopefully be home by half past four. I’m glad my hours are flexible and I can do this, but unfortunately it means spending a few hours doing work in the evenings.”

Miranda took another sip of tea, then finally set her cup on the coffee table and leaned into the other woman’s arms. “We’ll make it work,” Miranda said. “I’ll be home at 6:15, then we can eat dinner, and you can work from seven until nine if you’d like,” she said. “I can even pick the girls up a few days each week, but I’ll have to go in earlier, which means you taking them in the morning.” She turned her head and looked Andrea in the eye. “Nevermind, you’re too grumpy in the morning. That wouldn’t work,” she added with a smile.

“Hey. I took Caroline and Cassidy today and we all survived,” she protested.

“I know. And that is only because the twins’ first day began at ten instead of eight.” She sighed and softly kissed Andrea on the lips before laying her head on the younger woman’s shoulder.
“Where has the time gone? My babies are in school…”

Andrea wrapped her arm tightly around Miranda’s shoulders. “It’s strange. In some ways, it seems like it was just yesterday when they were born. But, when you think about it, the past—what—almost six years seems like a lifetime. For me, at least. I feel like my life didn’t really start until you. And while these past few years may have gone by a little too quickly, I’ve loved every minute. I don’t really remember what it was like without you, Cassidy, Caroline, Callie, and Cate in my life,” she said.

“I know what you mean,” she said. “And I feel awful thinking about it sometimes, but it’s as if the memories we’re making are replacing the past. I can hardly remember the girls’ first words. But I remember everything about the day when Callie looked at you and said ‘mama,’” she said. “I didn’t think I would be so emotional today, but…I don’t know. It’s like the empty nest thing, I guess.”

“Sweetheart, I hate to break it to you, but we’ve got another thirteen years before we can claim that status,” Andrea said.

Miranda chuckled. “You know what I mean. With everyone in school, the townhouse will be so quiet during the day. Maybe I could—”

“No. Don’t say it,” Andrea interrupted.

“—finally retire.” She turned and glared at Andrea. “Why are you so against me retiring? I’ve worked long and hard. Plus, Serena’s ready. She’s more than ready, actually. I’m getting concerned that someone else may poach her from us one of these days.”

“Miranda, I’m not against anything. I will fully support you in whatever you choose, but I don’t think you’re ready to sit home alone with nothing to do all day. I’m sorry. It’s the truth,” Andrea said.

“What makes you think I would sit and do nothing?” Miranda asked.

“Okay, tell me what an ideal day would be like. Or week, even.”

“Well, I would wake up and get all the girls off to school—pack lunches, review their homework, all that. Then, I could stop at the market on the way home and get something for dinner. I could go to a yoga class or go play tennis at the club, then straighten up things around the house, maybe do a load or two of laundry. Then, it would be time to pick the girls up and spend time with all of you.”

“And you don’t think that would get old after a week?”

“No. It would be…nice. I could change it up, too. Maybe on Monday I would go to yoga, but Tuesday I would sit home and read. And on Thursday I could come visit you at the office or something.”

“See? That’s it. You’re not the kind of person who is content with sitting still. I know you, darling. Leisure is not your thing,” Andrea said. “Before you make any major decisions, can we at least sit and talk about this a little more?”

“Of course, sweetheart,” Miranda said, kissing her quickly before standing up. “I should be getting to the office, though.”

Andrea stood and followed her, spinning her around and pressing her back against the office door as a startled gasp escaped her lips. “You didn’t even say anything about the shades,” Andrea
whispered in her ear.

“Wh-what about them?” was Miranda’s hoarse reply.

“I had them installed just for you,” she said, blowing gently on the woman’s neck. “The last time you were here, you recommended roman shades because they offered more privacy, and,” she gently bit down on the woman’s neck, “they absorb sound.”

“Andreeeaa,” Miranda whined, ducking out of her arms and smoothing out her skirt. “Darling, I have to get to the office.”

“Just one kiss?” Andrea pouted.

“You realize this is where our daughters get it from, right? This is why it takes us forty-five minutes to tuck them in at night,” Miranda said.

“Please?” Andrea asked, looking up at Miranda with her big brown eyes.

Miranda rolled her eyes and took the younger woman in her arms, kissing her thoroughly. A few minutes later, when she finally pulled away, her eyes widened.

“What?”

Miranda’s eyes were fixed on Andrea’s lips and the reddish ring around them. “What lipstick are you wearing? Is that the Stila?”

“Yeah, why?” Andrea asked.

“It’s all over your face,” Miranda said, “and probably smeared on mine, too.”

Andrea opened her desk drawer and pulled out her compact. “Miranda! How am I going to go to my meeting like this?!”

The older woman chuckled. “If I remember correctly, you were the one who was pouting. Here,” she said, taking a small container of Vaseline petroleum jelly from her handbag. “This will break down the formula and you should be able to wipe it away. Give me some, too.”

Once they had sufficiently cleaned up, Miranda gave Andrea a quick kiss on the cheek. “I’ll be home by 6:15,” she said.

“We’ll all be waiting. And tonight…do you think we can pick up where things left off?”

“Most certainly,” Miranda said as she opened the office door. “Call me if you need anything. Love you.”

“Love you, too. See you later.”

“Okay, Mom. We’ll be there in an hour.”

“You make sure you don’t distract your sister! It’s getting dark out.”

“Mom, we know. And we’re both capable of driving in the dark. I’m going to hang up so we can focus on driving. Love you.”

“Love you, Caroline. Tell your sister I love her, too,” Miranda said.
“Okay. See ya,” Caroline said, ending the call. “Jeez, I don’t know what she thinks is going to happen to us, like, will this Escalade turn into a pumpkin when the sun sets?”

Cassidy giggled and shook her head. “Leave her alone. She’s worried. Aaaand it’s Mother’s Day tomorrow.”

“Yeah, you’re right.” Caroline slouched against the comfy leather seats of the Cadillac Escalade their mother insisted they drive. While she had her heart set on a white Mazda Miata, she knew a tiny sports car could never have seats this comfortable. “Cass,” she said, gazing out the window at the sunset, “do you think Mom was always gay?”

They drove in silence for a few minutes before Cassidy answered. “I don’t know. I never really thought about it. I mean, she got pregnant twice—from having sex with a guy.”

“Well, technically, we don’t know about the last time…”

“True. That was immaculate conception if you ask her.”

Caroline laughed. “But I mean, seriously. Obviously she’s had sex with dad, and probably a few other guys. But, do you think it was because it wasn’t acceptable back then, or like, that she didn’t discover those feelings until she met Andy?”

“You should probably ask her that, not me,” Cassidy said with a shrug. “Why, are you wondering if it’s like genetic or something?” she added with a snicker.

“No! No, I just, I don’t know. I was thinking.”

A few minutes went by in silence, and Cassidy pulled to a stop at the stoplight. “Hey, Care,” she said, turning and picking up her sister’s hand. “Are you—I mean—do you like girls like that?”

Caroline pulled her hand away. “I don’t know. It’s like…how do you know? What does it feel like?”

“Stace said she gets tingly and gets wet between her legs when Sean kisses her.”

Caroline rolled her eyes. “I know, and that just sounds like she’s watched too many movies or something. I mean, I don’t really feel any differently towards girls or boys. Do you?”

“I don’t know. I guess sometimes when a really cute boy like Chris Schwartz or Erik Chandler walks by, it kind of gives me butterflies or something,” Cassidy said.

“Have you ever done anything with a guy?”

“Not really. When Jason and I were together a few months ago, I mean, we kissed, duh, but no, I didn’t do anything else with him. That’s why we broke up.”

“I thought…oh, that’s right.” She sighed.

“What about you? You and Brian were inseparable for a solid month, then I don’t think I’ve seen him since, except in Pre-Calc.”

“Uh, yeah.”

“Yeah what?”

“Yeah, we did stuff.”
“Did you go all the way?!” she asked, shocked.

“No, no,” Caroline quickly reassured her. “I would have told you if we did *that*. But, um, we kissed a lot, and I let him put his hand in my pants, and I gave him a blow job.”

“What! How did you not tell me about this?!”

“You and Jason just started seeing each other. And then, I don’t know, you were so busy with that video. Whatever, it’s fine. It’s not like I need to talk about it,” Caroline said.

“But you’re my sister. I can’t talk with Cate or Callie about this stuff,” Cassidy said, taking a deep breath. “What was it like?”

“Which part?”

“Both, I guess. Well, I mean, what did he do when he put his hands in your pants?”

“First, it was just one hand. But, uh, he just rubbed me. It felt weird.”

“Good weird, or just weird weird?”

“Jeez, Nancy Drew, enough with the questions. I guess it was good. It’s not like I was crying out in ecstasy or anything, but I mean, if he wanted to do it again, I would have let him.”

“So it turned you on? Sorry. Last question,” Cassidy said.

“That’s just it. *I don’t know.* How can you tell if you’re on or off? I mean, it didn’t feel that different, so I don’t think it turned me on. I mean, it doesn’t matter,” she said.

“You should talk to Andy. She used to live with that guy when she first started working for Mom, remember? She’d be honest with you.”

Caroline shrugged. “I’m going to close my eyes. Wake me up when we’re near Sag.”

“Okay. But please don’t ruin Mom and Andy’s weekend. We worked on that video for a long time,” Cassidy said.

“I know. I won’t say anything.”

Thirty minutes later, Caroline woke to the sound of the crushed stone crunching beneath their tires. She looked out the window and saw her mom and Andy curled up on the swing on the front porch. Andy was holding a glass of white wine, and her mother seemed to be holding a glass of scotch or something.

Cassidy parked next to their mom’s BMW SUV, and turned the engine off. “Hey Care,” she said, before opening the door, “you know you can talk to me, right? I mean, when I’m not asking you a million questions?”


They climbed out of the car and grabbed their bags from the back. Caroline elbowed her sister as they approached the house. “Mom’s drunk. Look at her,” she whispered, giggling. They watched as Andy whispered something into Miranda’s ear, then took the drink from her hand.

“Bobseys…I’m so glad you made it,” she said, hugging and kissing them each. “There’s leftovers in the fridge if you want…just, don’t wake the girls up.”

“I’ll have what she’s having,” Caroline whispered, hugging and kissing Andy, who rolled her eyes.

“Maybe if you’re good,” Andrea said to the white-haired woman in her arms, “the girls will make you breakfast in the morning.”

Miranda closed her eyes and curled up against Andrea’s body. “I can be yare…I’ll promise to be yare,” Miranda said, wrapping her arm tighter around Andrea’s waist.

“Seriously?” Caroline asked. “You two still haven’t taken The Philadelphia Story out of the DVD player? It’s been there since, like—“

“—since we replaced the VHS player, which had a copy of that same movie stuck in it. Remember?” Cassidy said. “Mom loves watching that movie—not at home, just here in the Hamptons.”

“Oh, you two, go on inside. I think the girls are actually watching a movie upstairs. Will you check on them?” Andrea asked.

“Sure. Send us a text if you need help carrying her upstairs,” Cassidy said, snickering.

Once the girls were inside, Andrea set their drinks on the table and snuggled closer to Miranda, who had already fallen asleep. She pressed a kiss to her forehead and tucked a stray wisp of hair behind her ear. “Just when I think I can’t possibly love you any more than I already do, you amaze me, and I fall in love with you all over again,” Andrea whispered. She wrapped her arms tightly around the other woman and drifted off to sleep.

Several hours later, she woke to a loud shouting noise. Immediately, she jumped from the swing, intending to run into the house and upstairs to locate the source of the noise, but she apparently forgot that her feet were entangled with Miranda’s. When Andrea went crashing to the ground on her hands and knees, Miranda, too, woke from her sleep.

“Darling, what is it?” Miranda asked, yawning.

“Fuck,” she said, examining the broken skin on the palm of her hand. “That hurt.”

“What are you doing down there?” Miranda asked.

“I heard the girls,” she said.

Twin giggles filled the air, along with a “Cassy, stoop!” shout. Andrea breathed a sigh of relief.

“We better go check on them,” Miranda said, sitting up and stretching her back. She stood to her feet and helped Andrea up off the ground and into the house. When they got upstairs, they stood in the doorway of their master bathroom, shocked at the scene in front of them. “What on earth…”

Cassidy and Caroline stood at opposite ends of the room, each holding a spritz bottle, presumably filled with water. Cate and Callie were in the bathtub, wearing their bathing suits, holding cans of their bath foam that were empty, judging by the looks of the bathroom.

“That’s it,” Andrea said. “Cate, Callie—bed. Now. Caroline, Cassidy—your room, now. Leave the water bottles here.”

Andrea started to follow the eldest girls out of the bathroom, then paused.
“Go,” Miranda said. “I’ll get them cleaned up.”

Andrea nodded and followed the girls into their room to have a serious chat. Miranda, on the other hand, couldn’t help but smile at her adorable, innocent little angels.

“My babies, what did you get yourselves into?” she said, smiling.

“Sorry, Mom,” Callie said, looking down at the ground.

“Come here.” Miranda hugged her and kissed her on the cheek. “As long as you’re safe and happy, I don’t care about this mess,” she said.

“Really?” Cate asked as Miranda wrapped her other arm around her.

“Of course. You’re my angels, and Mommy loves you so very much. Let’s get you two rinsed off, then into some dry pjs and off to bed, okay?”

The girls eagerly nodded as Miranda retrieved two towels from the linen closet.

“Bathing suits off—just leave them over there,” she said, pointing to the floor next to the tub. She turned on the spray in the giant walk-in shower and let the water heat up to an appropriate temperature. Then, she turned to them and secured their hair in a bun on the top of their heads before leading them into the shower. “Quick rinse,” she said as she took the hand-held spray and got all the suds off their skin. “Arms up…okay, turn around. And, we’re finished,” she said, turning off the water.

She wrapped them in giant towels as they stepped out, then walked with them down the hall to their bedroom where they each put on clean underwear and a night shirt before Miranda tucked them in.

“Love you, Mom,” Callie said.

“Yeah, you’re the best,” Cate added. “Love you.”

Miranda hugged and kissed them again, then headed upstairs in search of the rest of her family, who all happened to be sitting on the floor, leaning up against the bed. “What did I miss?”

“We were just playing with the girls. We’ll clean up your bathroom,” Caroline said.

“Don’t worry, it’s fine,” Miranda said.

“I was just telling them how you scared me half to death six years ago when you fainted,” Andrea said.

Miranda looked at her with one eyebrow raised.

“Do you remember what we were arguing about?”

Miranda slowly shook her head. “I just remember I told you to stop acting childish, but I didn’t mean to say it out loud. You got upset and said you were going to sleep downstairs on the couch,” she said.

“Yeah, and then halfway down the stairs, I hear this thump and find your mother on the ground next to the bed.”

“What happened that made you faint, Mom?” Cassidy asked.
“When you’re pregnant, a lot of your blood and oxygen is going to the babies, so if you get up too fast, sometimes your body hasn’t had a chance to pump all that oxygen-rich blood back around to your heart and brain.”

“Isn’t that dangerous, though?” Cass asked.

“Not really. It’s the falling that’s dangerous. Fainting is kind of like a power nap for your body. That’s what the doctor told me when I was pregnant with you two, anyway,” she said with a smile. “But yes, I did give Andrea quite a scare. See? That’s why you should never storm out of the room on me,” Miranda said with a wink.

Andrea glanced at the clock. “Oh, wow. It’s quarter past midnight already,” she said, getting up. “Why don’t you girls get to bed so you can get up at a decent hour tomorrow?”

They nodded.

“Oh, wait,” Caroline said. “Happy Mothers’ Day.”

“Thank you, sweetheart,” Miranda said, hugging her.

“You, too, Andy,” Cassidy said, hugging her. “I love you.”

“I love you, too, Cass,” she said.

The following day, after bringing their moms breakfast in bed and taking a long, leisurely walk along the beach, Cassidy led everyone to the living room while she put a DVD in the player.

“Sorry, Mom. I just need to take The Philadelphia Story out for a few minutes. I’ll put it back, promise,” she said.

Miranda smiled and pulled Cate onto her lap, hugging her tightly.

“Me and Cate helped on this, too!” Callie said, climbing onto Andrea’s lap.

“Okay,” Cassidy said, taking a deep breath. “Mom, Andy, happy Mothers’ Day. Hope you like it. You both mean the world to the four of us, and we wanted to give you something special,” she said, pressing the “play” button on the remote.

The video opened with Cassidy playing the guitar and softly singing an incredible version of The Beatles’ “In My Life.”

“Cassidy, sweetie, this is beautiful,” Miranda said.

“Keep watching, there’s more,” she and Caroline said at the same time.

The camera slowly panned out to a table covered in photographs, then transitioned into a slideshow, all while Cassidy sang. It began with photos of Miranda’s first pregnancy, and then photos and a few videos of when Cassidy and Caroline were babies. There were photos of their first day of school, their piano recitals—everything. Then, there were a few photos of Andrea from when she first started at Runway. In the first few photos, her hair was covering her face, or she was looking away, and then suddenly she was in pictures with the girls. There was a candid of Andrea and Miranda from their first New Years’ together that neither of them had seen before.

Next was the sonogram, some images of Miranda pregnant again, and then the first two photos of Cate and Callie that Andrea snapped before they were even named. The song switched over to One
Direction’s “What Makes You Beautiful,” and there were tons and tons of photos of their family. Some of them, Andrea recognized. Others, she had no idea how they could have even gotten that picture. The last few photos were of Andrea and Miranda on the porch swing, the twins covered in bath foam, and then the family walking along the beach earlier that day.

As the screen faded to black, simple white text crawled across the screen:

To the best moms in the whole wide world—

We love you and are lucky to have you.

Happy Mothers’ Day.

All our love, your daughters,

Caroline, Cassidy, Callista, & Catherine

Andrea turned and looked at Miranda, but she had her face buried in Catherine’s hair.

“Did you like it, Mom?” Callie asked.

“Yes, darling, I loved it. I’m going to treasure this gift forever and ever,” she said, hugging her tightly. “Go give Mommy a hug,” she whispered. Callie climbed onto Miranda’s lap while Andrea hugged and kissed Caroline and Cassidy.

“I was really nervous you guys would think it was cheesy,” Cassidy admitted. “So it was really okay?”

“Sweetheart, it was perfect. You and your sisters put so much thought into it—you know, you really screwed yourselves for next year, though,” Andrea said with a chuckle.

Miranda turned and gave Andrea an I-can’t-believe-you-just-said-that look.

“Seriously, if I made a video of all those looks that Mom gives you—like that one just now—you know that would top this,” Caroline said.

“I’m glad the girls understand what I see in you,” Miranda said quietly. “The girls and I got you something else, too.” Miranda nodded and Callie ran and pulled the box out of the cabinet where it was hiding, then handed it to Andrea.

She unwrapped and opened the box, revealing a delicate gold necklace with five dangling heart charms—two with a tiny diamond, one with an emerald fleck, and two with a ruby fleck. “Thank you,” Andrea said, immediately putting the necklace on. “This is beautiful. I love it.”

“I’m glad. You and the girls got me this lovely ring last year, and, well, we wanted to make sure you had something special, too,” Miranda said.

“The red ones are for Cate and me,” Callie said, pointing, “and the white ones are for Caroline and Cassidy, and the green one is for Mommy.”

“Oh wow, how cool is that!” Andrea said. She knew her daughter was proud of her explanation. “You know what else that means? That Mommy’s birthday is coming up soon.”

“Really?” Cate asked, looking up at Miranda.

She nodded and smiled. “For my birthday this year, I want—let me think about this. Breakfast in
bed, lots and lots of hugs and kisses, snuggle time, a vanilla birthday cake, and more hugs and kisses.” She smiled and looked at her two youngest daughters. “Did I forget anything?”

“I think we can get you everything on your list,” Cassidy said, “right?”

“Yes!” the girls shouted in unison.

“Well, I don’t know about you, but I’m ready for lunch,” Andrea said. “Thank you again for the wonderful presents, girls. Who wants to help me in the kitchen?”

Cate, Callie, and Caroline eagerly followed Andrea into the kitchen while Cassidy took the DVD out and put *The Philadelphia Story* back in.

“Sweetheart,” Miranda said, gesturing for Cassidy to sit next to her on the couch, “thank you again. It was a beautiful video, and I think you have some real talent, too. Would you like to take a photography or design class this summer, maybe?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know, I never really thought about it. I mean, it couldn’t hurt.”

“Good. I’ll ask Patrick for some information and then you can take a look. Um, I wanted to thank you, too, for making Andrea feel special this year, too.”

“Of course, she’s our mom, too,” Cassidy said.

“I know, and I love it that you think of her that way—it’s just, I think she still feels a little left out sometimes. So, thank you for that.”

Cassidy reached over and hugged her mother. “Want to watch a few minutes while they finish lunch?”

Miranda nodded while Cassidy turned on the DVD player and fast-forwarded to her favorite scene the night before the wedding. “You always did love to watch this with me, why is that?”

Cassidy shrugged. “I remember hearing it a lot growing up. It seemed like it was always on, or I was always falling asleep to it or something. And you’re not usually into movies, so that makes it even more special.”

“Oh, Cassidy, I don’t know what I would do without you,” she said, wrapping her arms around her as she laid her head on her chest. “You’re so grown-up already, but you’ll always be my baby girl.”

“Thanks, Mom,” she said, squeezing her hand tightly.

In May of 2015, Caroline and Cassidy graduated from high school. As a graduation present, James took them on a two-week trip to Europe in June. Caroline would be attending the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia in the fall to study business and communications, while Cassidy would attend Yale to study liberal arts since she was still a little unsure what she wanted to do. They were all so proud of the girls—even Cate and Callie couldn’t stop telling their friends about their big sisters going to college.

Also, that summer, Miranda began to slowly step away from her Editor-in-Chief duties. Irv Ravitz called it quits a few years prior, and Jackson Caldwell took his seat on the Board. Irv hadn’t tried anything since Paris in 2006, but that cloud of uncertainty hung in the halls until Jackson stepped in. He, unlike Irv, knew that *Runway* was and would continue to be the company’s most profitable venture. He worked closely with Miranda to find ways for Elias Clarke to make strides in the
digital publishing space, including everything from exclusive video content to high-quality iPad editions. She promoted Serena to Senior Editor in June, with the understanding that she would take the next eleven months to ensure Serena had the right connections—and to clear out of her office.

“Hey Mom,” Cassidy said, waving at her iPhone.

“Hi Bobbsey,” Miranda said, smiling back through FaceTime. “What is going on with your hair?”

She laughed. “Um, I let Chelsea, my roommate, give me a blow-out. It’s pretty huge, huh?”

“I’ll say. Looks like a wig,” she said. “Did you get the box that Uncle Nigel sent you last week? He was cleaning out the closet and thought you’d like that poncho.”

“Yes!” Cassidy said. “In his note, he said he tried giving it to Andy when she worked at Runway, but she wouldn’t wear it.”

“Good. Don’t forget to send him an email or text thanking him. He asks after you and your sister all the time,” Miranda said.

“Is he still giving Cate and Callie dance lessons?”

“Oh, of course. He and Michael came over in tutus on Saturday, and the girls loved it. You’ll have to ask them.”

“I’ll give them a call this weekend. How’s work? Anything new with you and Andy?”

“Work is good. Serena is doing a remarkable job. I don’t think she really needs me around, so I’m working shorter days and slowly but surely packing everything up,” Miranda said.

“Good. And Andy? She emailed me a few days ago and said John was stepping down. Do you think she’s going to get his job?”

“Well, there’s nothing official yet, but, yes, that is the plan.”

“Awesome! Is she excited?”

“I think so. It’s a great opportunity for her.”

“What’s wrong?”

Miranda smiled. Cassidy could always read her so well. “Her 35th birthday is coming up and I don’t know what to get her.”

“Oh, Mom. You seriously do this every single year. Why don’t you just marry her already? I mean, you can only promise it so many times,” she said.

Miranda stared at her with a confused look on her face.

“You’ve been engaged for what, eight years? And it’s been totally legal for at least the past five. You two always said you’d do it someday.”

“Sweetheart, do you think you and Caroline could meet us in the city in a few weeks on a Friday afternoon?” Miranda asked.

“Sure. I’ve got Fall Break in two weeks, so I was planning to come home anyway. I think Penn has their break the week after ours, but I don’t think Care has class on Fridays this semester. So, are
“You doing a big party, too?”

“No. Andrea doesn’t want that. Okay, I have to go. Andrea is home. I’ll email you, sweetie. Love you. Call us if you need anything.”

“Okay, bye. Tell Andy I said congrats on the job,” Cassidy said.


Cassidy smiled. “Yep, I’m good. Talk to you later. Love ya!”

Miranda closed the iPad and pulled Andrea onto her lap. “How was work, darling?”

“Linda called me into her office today and offered me John’s job.”

“That’s wonderful!” Miranda said, hugging her tightly. “You accepted, of course?”

“Yes. I was shocked, though, when I realized his salary was three times what I’m currently making. I mean, how ridiculous is it that executives are getting paid so much and there are hard-working people struggling to provide for their families?”

“Honey, did you say anything?” Miranda asked.

“No. I just shook her hand and said ‘thank you,’” Andrea said. “But I think, since we already have college funds setup for Cate and Callie, we should really start getting involved with a charity organization.”

Miranda smiled. “I think that’s a wonderful idea. I’ve been looking around a little, you know, so I can occupy myself once I leave Runway, and CFA—City Foundation for the Arts—could be a good option for us both. Personally, I’d like to see them expand and include more fashion- and design-related programs, as well as more programs for LGBT youth, and I’m sure you would be interested in some of their initiatives for aspiring journalists.”

“Sounds good,” Andrea said. She bent down and kissed Miranda deeply. “The girls won’t be home for another hour or so,” she said, gently biting the other woman’s lower lip.

Miranda inhaled sharply and firmly grabbed Andrea’s ass. “I doubt we’ll need that long,” she whispered.

An hour later, they were sitting on the couch in the den, staring out the window in a peaceful silence, waiting for Jacob—Roy’s twenty-seven-year-old son and their new driver—to bring the girls home from school.

“Andrea,” Miranda asked, looking up at her. “Will you marry me?”

The younger woman smiled. “Of course, but, um, haven’t we already been through that? Isn’t that why I wear this everyday?” she asked, flaunting her diamond.

“I meant, will you come with me to City Clerk’s office so we can get a marriage license, and then sometime in the next sixty days, accompany me to City Hall so we can make it official?”

“Yes. Yes!” Andrea said, hugging her tightly. “You really want to do it?”

“Yes,” Miranda said. “I’ve never stopped thinking about it, and, well, with your birthday coming up, I wanted to do something special.”
“Would you want a party? A traditional ceremony?”

“It’s entirely up to you,” Miranda said. “Just tell me what it is that you want and I’ll make it happen.”

“I want it to be just us. City Hall or wherever. Maybe the girls can be our witnesses,” she said. “And, no party or anything. It’s kind of selfish, but I just want to celebrate with you. Is that okay?”

“I couldn’t think of anything better,” Miranda said with a smile as their daughters burst through the front door.

Their wedding in early November was nothing short of perfect. Caroline and Cassidy both surprised Andrea by showing up at City Hall with them, and after they exchanged their simple, but honest vows, they left for a weeklong honeymoon in the Hamptons while Helen and Mary Ann stayed in the city with the girls.

It was cool, grey, and rainy, but as she sat on the back porch swing with her wife, looking out at the ocean, there wasn’t a single thing Miranda would change. She wasn’t worried about any upcoming photo shoots or uninspired layouts. She wasn’t worried about how much time her daughters were spending playing games on their iPads, or how many parties her other daughters were going to where alcohol was involved. She wasn’t worried about growing old or sagging skin. She wasn’t worried about making a statement in the latest of Lagerfeld’s creations. She wasn’t even worried about dying twenty years before her wife. Because, this week, none of it mattered. That week, she was wearing mismatched loungewear, sitting on the porch swing with a wool sweater. She wasn’t wearing any makeup, and she put a bobby pin in her hair to hold her bangs back. None of it mattered because she was wrapped up in her wife’s arms, watching the waves crash against the sand.

For Christmas that year, Catherine and Callie wanted to spend the holidays somewhere that wasn’t New York City. Miranda suggested somewhere warm, with a beach, thinking they were just tired of the weather, but they turned that down right away. When Andrea suggested getting a cabin in Aspen, Colorado, they loved it. None of them were too keen about skiing, so they spent most of the time relaxing in the peace and quiet, sitting around a fireplace and watching the snow fall.

Cassidy told her family about a boy she was dating, and she hinted that he was going to ask her to go with his family to the Dominican Republic for Spring Break. Miranda and Andrea, of course, both wanted to meet him first, so they planned a trip out to visit her in Connecticut for the end of January.

Caroline, on the other hand, was doing really well in her studies, and she was now majoring in international communications and business. She told them about a program she was applying for at Penn where ten international business majors would be selected for a weeklong immersion program in Hong Kong over Spring Break. Andrea was very encouraging, and they told her they would be sure to visit her in Philadelphia soon, especially if they didn’t get to see her over break.

A few months later, Cassidy was home in New York (she and her boyfriend broke up before their trip) while Caroline was studying in Hong Kong. Miranda was a nervous wreck, so Andrea talked to Serena and made sure she had a time-consuming project at work to keep her mind off the fact that her nineteen-year-old daughter was on the other side of the world.

Andrea took a few days off to spend with Cassidy, and for the most part, they were able to plan everything for Miranda’s 60th birthday party in May.
“So, we’re going to tell Mom that Uncle Nigel is giving her a little retirement party, just for her close friends, but in actuality, it’s going to be a huge party with friends, family, designers, the works, right?”

Andrea nodded. “If she asks him for details, Nigel’s going to tell her it will be a quaint dinner in the Conrad Suite at Waldorf Astoria, when in reality, we’ll have the main ballroom. I’ll tell her that the five of us are going out for a nice dinner, too, so she won’t get suspicious.”

“I still can’t believe Elias Clarke is paying for half of this,” Cassidy said.

“I know. They didn’t have to, but it’s nice that they recognize everything your mother has done for that magazine over the years. Now, before we send the final guest list to her assistant, let’s make sure we didn’t leave anyone off. Then, we should book flights and make hotel reservations for my parents, my cousins, and then James’ parents, too. Oh, and this probably goes without saying, but let’s not tell Cate and Callie until that night.”

“You know, I’m starting to see what attracted Mom to you ten years ago,” Cassidy said, smiling as she leaned back against the couch.

“What?” Andrea asked, blushing slightly.

“You’re organized. You think of everything. You have a plan and a back-up, and a back-up to the back-up. You make pulling off a party with a 1,000+ person guest list seem like it’s no big deal.”

“Well, it’s not a big deal if you do it correctly.”

Cassidy grinned. “I’m so glad Mom found you,” she said.

“You know, there are still some days when I wake up and feel like it’s all been a dream. You’ve welcomed me into your family and it’s just…it’s really been a dream,” Andrea said, hugging her.

“Mom could have never handled it all without you.”

“Do you think she’ll cry at the party?” Andrea asked.

They exchanged glances and both erupted in laughter. “Oh, you kill me, Andy. You know she’s going to be a sobbing mess. We’ll have to bring her makeup.”

A few months later, Miranda called Andrea from her office. “Hi, are you busy?”

“Nope, what’s up?” Andrea said.

“Can you slip away for a while and come join me here?”

“Sure, where’s ‘here’?”

“My office.”

“I’m leaving now,” Andrea said, grabbing her bag and heading out the door. “Is everything okay?”

“Yes. Thank you, Andrea.”

“Of course. See you in ten minutes.” She quickly hailed a cab and dialed Nigel’s number as she was on her way. “Nige, what’s going on with my wife? She wants to see me in her office.”
“Yes. I think she’s a bit nostalgic. The movers left about an hour ago with the last of her things, and they started taking the couch out, explaining that Serena ordered new furniture.”

“Ohh, shit. Bad timing, huh?”

“Yeah. They cleared it up, though. They’re not touching anything until she leaves today.”

“Is it bad? I mean, do you think she’ll be okay for the party tomorrow?” Andrea asked, getting out of the car and heading into the building.

“Nothing you can’t fix, sweetie. I’ve gotta go. Good luck!”

Andrea took a deep breath and walked down the hall. The assistants were sitting at the desk, and she kindly asked them to relocate to the conference room for the rest of the day. She quietly opened the office doors and shut them behind her.

Miranda was sitting on the large windowsill behind her desk. Her shoes were on the floor, and she had her feet tucked up underneath her. “Thirty years…” she said quietly.

Andrea walked over and stood behind her, wrapping her arms around the woman and resting her chin on her shoulder. “You’ll have to get used to a different view,” she said.

“I can’t believe it’s all over,” Miranda said.

“Tell me what you liked most about this office. What was your favorite memory?”

Miranda smiled and wiped a stray tear from her eye. “I’ll never forget the day I brought Cate and Callie here to the office. I think it was the only time I ever sat on the floor.”

“I remember that, too,” Andrea said. “What about thirty years ago? Did you have the same furniture and everything?”

“No. I changed it in 2002, right after the World Trade Center…well, everything just needed a refresh. The colors were darker before that, more like our study at home. It just made sense to redo everything in white and ivory.”

“Was there anything you ever wanted to do here, but didn’t get the chance?” Andrea asked.

“I can’t believe it’s over,” she repeated, shaking her head.

“I know,” Andrea said. “I can’t think of the right analogy, but you still have so much to offer, Miranda.”

She quickly turned around. “I know that. Oh, darling, please. I’m just a little sad, not beside myself. The girls are still in middle school, and I’m glad I’ll never miss another event because of this magazine. And we have so many new memories to make…”

Andrea gently kissed Miranda on the cheek and took her hands. “Indulge me, then?”

Miranda nodded and let herself be led from the sill. The younger woman pressed a few buttons on her iPhone, then set it on the desk. Miranda smiled as the familiar tune by Cole Porter began to fill the room.

“Dance with me,” she said.

Miranda wrapped her arm around Andrea’s neck and slowly danced around her office, humming as
she swayed to the music. When it stopped, Miranda stood on her tip-toes and kissed her.

“I can think of something else we’ve never done in this office,” Andrea whispered.

“No. We’ve made enough memories here,” Miranda said, walking over to the windowsill and putting on her shoes. “I’m ready to leave.”

The next morning, Cassidy and Caroline made breakfast for the girls and took them out for manicures and pedicures, giving their moms some time alone. Around five o’clock, everyone started to get ready. Miranda thought it was a wonderful idea for Andrea to take the girls out, and part of her wanted to skip her little dinner party that Nigel arranged just so that she could join them.

Jacob came by to pick up Andrea and the girls in the limousine, and they said goodbye to Miranda, rushing out the door so they wouldn’t miss their reservation. About thirty minutes later, a town car pulled up for Miranda and she was shocked and delighted when Roy stepped out and opened the door for her.

“Roy, my goodness, it’s been years. How are you and Kathleen?” Miranda said, hugging and kissing him on the cheek.

“We’ve been doing well. Thank you,” he said. “I’m glad Jacob is working out.”

“You have no idea how much I appreciate your family’s loyalty. Thank you,” she said, sliding into the backseat.

At the Waldorf Astoria, Michelle, one of the assistant managers, met Miranda out front and led her inside.

“I thought this was in the Conrad suite?” Miranda asked as Michelle led her in the opposite direction of the east elevators.

“Yes, we unfortunately have some emergency maintenance repairs on the main elevators. We’ll just cut through the ballroom and use the north elevators.”

Miranda nodded and followed her, thinking about what her girls would be talking about at the restaurant. When Michelle opened the doors to the ballroom, and turned on the lights, Miranda looked up and saw familiar faces: Andrea, her daughters, Nigel, Serena & Emily. She froze for a moment, then felt Andrea take her hand. “Andrea, what’s going on? I thought you and the girls were—”

“We lied,” Andrea said. “Happy birthday, my love,” she whispered, taking Miranda’s coat and bag.

“Miranda,” Nigel said, hugging and kissing her. “I apologize for deceiving you, but everyone wanted to celebrate your amazing thirty-five year run at Runway.”

Miranda’s eyes finally adjusted and she took in everyone in the room. “Nigel—I—everyone is here. I don’t know what to say.”

“Well, don’t cry or anything. Everyone’s watching you,” he whispered.

She smirked and slapped him in the shoulder before turning to Serena and hugging her.

“Miranda, I’m going to get up and say a few words shortly—did you want to say anything?” Serena asked.
She took a deep breath and nodded. “Yes, just a few words. There’s no way I’ll be able to talk to everyone here tonight. Thank you, Serena.”

“Mommy!” Cate said, running up to her and giving her a big hug. Miranda picked her up and kissed her on the nose. “Happy Birthday, Mom!”

“And Happy Retirement!” Callie said, hugging her from the other side.

Miranda set Cate down and hugged both her girls. “I have to say hello to a lot of people. Will you girls mind coming with me?” she asked.

Everything about the party was perfect—even Miranda’s impromptu speech. Around ten o’clock, Cassidy and Caroline said their goodbyes and took their younger sisters home. Miranda and Andrea followed a bit later, while Serena’s assistants stayed around until the last guests left.

“Where is everyone staying?” Miranda asked while they were getting ready for bed.

“Our family has four or five rooms at the Four Seasons. They’re all heading back tomorrow afternoon. The girls are going to have breakfast with them—their grandparents, at least. I didn’t make any promises for us,” Andrea said.

“Let’s go. We hardly ever get to see George and Richard,” she said. “Wait, I mean, if you’re too busy, we don’t have to go. I’m sorry. I forgot you still have to go to work on Monday.”

Andrea shrugged. “Work will get done. I’m glad you enjoyed the party. Let’s get some sleep.”

Over the next few months, Miranda kept herself busy with charity work. She was invited as a guest lecturer at the 92nd Street YMCA, and recently there was speculation about an opening on the CFDA’s Board of Directors.

Other than that, Cate and Callie kept them very busy. Between school projects, after school clubs, field trips, and spending time with their friends, Miranda sometimes felt like she saw them less now than when she was working full time.

Every year, it seemed like May was the most hectic month. Cassidy and Caroline came back from school for summer vacation, but for the first few weeks, Cate and Callie still had classes at Dalton. This year, the girls had just turned twenty years old. Cate and Callie were two months shy of their tenth birthday, but Miranda and Andrea couldn’t agree on a party venue. Miranda wanted a pool party at their house in the Hamptons, but Andrea thought it was too dangerous.

“Hey Andy, why are you still up?” Cassidy asked as she walked by the study. “Can I come in?”

“Of course,” Andrea said, closing her laptop. “I was just trying to get ahead of some work so I would be free this weekend. What’s up?”

“Nothing. I’m just trying to catch up on my TV shows. Would you believe I missed the last season of Gossip Girl?” Cassidy said, sitting on the couch.

“Wow, you’ve been busy, huh?”

“Yeah. I’m taking two classes this summer, though, so it won’t be that way for long.”

“At CUNY, right? Which ones? Wasn’t there a computer one?”

“Yep. Introduction to HTML5 and Advanced Photography. I’m really looking forward to using my
“new camera you got me for my birthday. Maybe by the end of the summer, I can build my own website for my work,” she said.

“That would be really great, Cass. If you need help, I know our website editor at work is pretty cool and I’m sure he’d be willing to give you some tips.”

“Thanks.”

“What’s Caroline planning on doing this summer?” Andrea asked.

Cassidy rolled her eyes. “I wouldn’t know what to tell you. She’s spent every waking moment with Brian, and I literally haven’t have five minutes to talk to her,” she said.

“Is she asleep now?”

“Uh, no. She—she’s not home yet,” Cassidy said.

“What?” Andrea hissed.

Cassidy took a deep breath. “We went to meet our friends for a movie, right? And then stopped for Italian ice, and met up with some other friends. They were all going back to Brian’s house to hang out. I guess his parents are out of town. I didn’t want to go so I came home.”

“Without your sister? Sweetie, I don’t want you taking cabs by yourself at night,” Andrea said. “And where is Caroline? When is she coming home?”

Cassidy shrugged. “She didn’t say. She’s kind of bitchy when she’s with Brian. Like she’s pissed that she has to share the air space with anyone else.”

Andrea looked at the clock. It was just past midnight. “Cass, why don’t you go get some sleep, and try not to wake your mom or your sisters. I’m going to call Caroline.”


“Sweetie, come here,” she said, opening her arms and wrapping the young girl in a hug. “I love you. You don’t have to apologize. I’m just worried about your sister—and what your mother will say when she finds out,” Andrea said, kissing her on the forehead.

Cassidy left the room and Andrea quickly dialed Caroline’s number and left a voicemail: Hey Care, it’s Andy. Call me back immediately. Love you.

A few minutes later, the phone rang. “Caroline?”

“Hey Andy, what’s going on?”

“Caroline, where are you?”

“I’m at Brian’s,” she said. “It’s late, so I’m just going to stay over here.”

“Honey, I don’t think that’s a good idea. Let me come pick you up.”

“What? No. I’m not a little kid!”

“Caroline, you have to tell us if you’re making plans to stay somewhere else. We worry. And I don’t like the idea of you letting your sister come home by herself. Where are you?—I’ll come get you.”
“No. Don’t! God, that would be so embarrassing. I’m fine. It’s not like I have to tell you what I do every night when I’m at school. Why is it any different now?” Caroline said.

“No,” Andrea said. “And I don’t want to wake her up and make her a nervous wreck. It would behoove you to come back first thing in the morning, though.”

“Behoove? I’m going to pretend you didn’t say that. Thanks for covering for me, Andy.”

“Care, I am not ‘covering’ for you! If I knew where your boyfriend lived, I would be in the car this very minute. We will sit down and talk about this when you get home.”

“Okay. Sorry, Andy. I’ll be home in the morning. I love you.”

“Love you, too, Care. Please be safe tonight. Use protection, will you?” Andrea said.

“Yes, we’re good. Thanks, Andy. Goodnight, love you, too,” she said, hanging up the phone.

That morning, Miranda woke up early and made breakfast for the girls before taking them to school. Andrea arranged to work from home in the morning, explaining to Miranda she was in the middle of something and didn’t want to break her focus. In reality, she was a little nervous and wanted to wait for Caroline to get home.

The minute Miranda stepped out the door, Andrea texted Caroline: Are you coming home?

She replied immediately: On my way!

When Andrea heard the front door open, she practically ran downstairs and was surprised to see Miranda. “Oh, it’s you—you’re back already,” she said.

“Of course. I get home at this time every morning. I thought you were working—were you expecting someone else?” Miranda asked with a smile.

Just then, the front door opened and Caroline slipped inside, carefully closing it so it wouldn’t make a sound. She gasped when she saw her mother and Andy staring at her.

Miranda’s eyes went from the Manolo Blanhik heels to the BCBG miniskirt to the off-the-rack satin tank and blazer. Her eye makeup was smudged into what was crudely called ‘raccoon eyes,’ and her hair was tied up in a ponytail.

“Caroline…” Miranda said in a low, quiet voice neither of them had heard in a long time.

“Care, go upstairs now. Take a shower and get cleaned up, then your mother and I will be in to talk to you,” Andrea said.

“Mom, I’m sorry. I spent the night at a friend’s. I lost track of time, and then it was too late to come home. I talked to Andy, though, and she said it was okay,” Caroline babbled.

“Caroline. Upstairs, now,” Andrea said, pointing up the staircase.

She bent down and took off her heels before running up the stairs two-at-a-time. Miranda turned to Andrea, her eyes glowing with rage. “Do you mind telling me what the hell is going on?”
Andrea reached for Miranda’s hands, but she quickly pulled away. “Look, Miranda. I was going to
tell you. I was awake last night, which is how I heard Cassidy come in and realized Caroline
wasn’t with her.”

“And that’s when you just told her it was fine to stay out all night and come home looking like a
hooker?”

“Miranda, please calm down. I wanted to pick her up, but she convinced me she was okay. She
promised she was safe.”

“Who are you to let my daughter decide whether she’s being safe in the middle of the night in New
York City!?” Miranda shouted.

Andrea took a deep breath. “The girls are twenty years old. They need to make their own decisions.
I certainly wasn’t condoning her sleeping over at her boyfriend’s—I made—”

“Wait, boyfriend’s? You let her spend the night at her boyfriend’s house?”

Andrea took a deep breath. “I made it very clear that it was not okay and that we would all talk
about this tonight. But I also know that as parents, we can’t tell a twenty-year-old what to do. We
can only encourage her to make smart decisions, and to be safe about it.”

“Oh, so we’re just supposed to suggest she comes home at a decent hour, but if she doesn’t want to,
send her with a box of condoms? Is that what you’re saying? Clearly, you’re the one with the
parenting experience.”

“Okay, first, I’m going to pretend you didn’t just say that. Miranda, come on. At least I talk to them
about sex. Your daughters are beautiful young women going through some of the craziest, best
years of their lives. Instead of supporting them, you’re in some sort of denial. So what if I made
sure she had condoms? Whether you like it or not, your daughters are going to have sex. They’re
going to have sex—with boys, or maybe girls, who knows. And unless you’re ready for
grandchildren—I know I’m not—I’m going to keep encouraging them to use protection,” Andrea
said before she turned and marched up the stairs.

“Where are you going?”

“To sit and wait for Caroline to get out of the shower.”

Miranda followed her upstairs in silence. In Caroline’s bedroom, Andrea leaned against the desk
while Miranda took a seat on the edge of the bed next to Caroline, who was already out of the
shower.

“Caroline,” Miranda said, “I am disappointed in you. I thought I raised you better than that.”

While Miranda continued lecturing her daughter, Andrea noticed Cassidy standing in the doorway.
She softly waved her inside and moved over so she could lean against the desk, too.

“Nothing good happens after midnight, Caroline. As long as you’re living in this house, you will be
home by eleven-thirty!” Miranda said.

“Stop treating me like a fucking child!” Caroline shouted. “I’m not a bad kid. I stayed out too late
one time, Mom! At least when Andy is pissed, she still respects me and treats me like an adult.”

“Oh, because she tells you to use condoms, she’s the better parent?” Miranda hissed. “I won’t have
my daughters becoming some unmarried teen pregnancy statistic!”
“First, we’re not teenagers anymore. Second, I should have known that you were only concerned with what people would think of you,” Caroline said. “Well don’t worry. I’m nothing like you. Extramarital affairs and unplanned pregnancies aren’t my style!”

“Caroline Samantha Priestly!!” Miranda shouted. “Don’t you dare talk to me like that!” she screamed. She was visibly upset—her face was red, her fists were clenched, and she was shaking.

Andrea quietly wrapped her arm around Cassidy.

“Just because Andy accepts it without question doesn’t mean we do,” Caroline said quietly through her tears. “Mom, can’t you see what a double standard that is? I’m twenty, and you’re freaking out because you think I had sex last night—which I didn’t, if anyone cares to hear the truth—but yet, you slept around and won’t even tell Andy, your wife, who the father of her own children is. You are not in a position to judge me, Mom.”

Miranda opened her mouth to speak a few times, but couldn’t find the words. After a few minutes of silence, she cleared her throat. “Caroline, is this about Catherine and Callie’s father? If this has been bothering you so much, why haven’t you said something?”

“We tried, Mom. We’ve been trying for the past ten years. You just kept lying and saying they didn’t have a father. At some point, we realized that was biologically impossible, so we just stopped asking,” Caroline said.

Miranda looked up at Andrea who was standing on the other side of the room with her arm around Cassidy. Her eyes were closed as she pressed a kiss to Cassidy’s forehead. “Andrea? Do you have anything to say or did you spew out all you had to say downstairs—when you tried to explain why you were encouraging my daughters to have sex?”

Cassidy jumped away from the desk. “Don’t talk to Andy like that,” she said. “She is just as much our mother as you are. It’s easier to talk to her about stuff like that—especially stuff that you just want to pretend isn’t happening. She hardly ‘encourages’ us, but like Care said, she treats us like adults and respects us. She answers our questions and then always says,” Cass looked over at Caroline.

“‘If you’re going to be stupid, at least do it safely,’” they both said in unison.

Cassidy reached back and squeezed Andrea’s hand, but the brunette was looking down at the ground.

“Mom, don’t get mad at Andy because of this. If you want us to trust you enough to talk to you about this…well, I think you have to start with admitting that you cheated on Stephen and got yourself pregnant. And, I mean, you act like you did nothing wrong, but when it comes to us, one late night and I’m a hooker, isn’t that what you said? It’s not fair, Mom,” Caroline said.

Miranda looked up with tears in her eyes. “I’m sorry I didn’t set a better example for you,” she said quietly.

“Mom,” Cassidy said. “We love you no matter what.”

“We get that you want to make sure we don’t make the same mistakes you did, but—” Caroline was cut off.

“Catherine and Callie were not mistakes!” Miranda snapped.

“I know,” Caroline said. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it like that. It’s just, how can we learn from your
past experiences if you’re refusing to acknowledge that it even happened? We’re not ten years old anymore.”

Silence filled the room. Andrea had no intention of opening her mouth, and she prayed that the girls would just let this conversation die, despite how much she agreed with them.

“Mom,” Caroline continued, “if you’re not going to be honest with us about it, like I said before, you have absolutely no right to judge my decisions, which, by the way, do happen to be better than yours.” She jumped up from the bed and began walking out of her room.

“Wait!” Miranda called. “Wait, Caroline, please. We’re not through.”

Caroline stopped and stood near Cassidy.

Miranda turned to Andrea. “What about you? Do you think that? Does it bother you that I haven’t been honest? That I won’t talk about it? Tell me the truth.”

“Miranda, it’s been ten years,” she said. “I think there was a time when it bothered me very much, but now…” Andrea shrugged. “I do think Caroline has a valid point, though.”

“Why didn’t you tell me it bothered you?”

“Well, I tried to, but I never wanted it to lead to a huge fight. I just had to accept that not knowing was part of the package—that there were some things you would never trust me enough to share with me,” she said, wiping the tears from her eyes.

Miranda saw the hurt and disappointment in Andrea’s eyes and it nearly broke her heart. “I’m sorry,” she cried, looking over at her daughters. “I didn’t say anything at first because I thought Andrea wouldn’t want to be with me if she knew the truth—that she wouldn’t be able to trust me, to love me.”

“Obviously, in spite of this, she’s still with you,” Cassidy said.

Andrea walked over to the bed and sat next to Miranda. She picked up her hand and wrapped her arm around the woman’s shoulders. “I love you and will continue to love you for the rest of my life,” she whispered. “No matter what you have to say or whether you even say anything at all.”

“I don’t deserve this,” Miranda said.

“Girls, why don’t you give us a few minutes?”

“No, wait,” Miranda said. “Let them stay. They’re adults—you’ve all proven your point. I guess it’s about time I’m honest with you.”

“Miranda, you don’t have to,” Andrea said. Somewhere deep inside, she wasn’t sure she wanted to hear whatever it was Miranda had to say. Somehow, she thought it might be better if her promises weren’t put to the test.

“No. If I don’t say this now, it will drive a wedge between us—me and you anyway,” she said, looking at Caroline. She took a deep breath. “I’ve done things that I’m not proud of. I thought that not talking about it would make it disappear, but I think we all know it hasn’t. I don’t know who their father is,” she said.

Cassidy and Caroline exchanged glances, and Andrea’s mouth opened a little as she held her hand.
“We were at a party—some holiday gathering for Stephen’s company. I didn’t want to be there, but we promised to accompany each other to one work event each year and, well, this was the last one, and I had to go. He spent the night chasing after one of the cocktail waitresses, and I, well, I stayed at the bar all evening. I guess there are multiple lessons in here. Stephen left without even telling me. Once everyone was gone and the bartender began to close up, I grabbed my things and was heading towards the lobby to find a cab. A young man offered his arm as I was losing my balance, and he invited me upstairs for some coffee to sober up. He told me I was too gorgeous to be leaving alone. And, god, this sounds awful, but it had been so long since I truly felt desirable. A perfect stranger… The next thing I knew, well, I woke up in bed next to him without my clothes. It was something like three in the morning. I got up to use the bathroom and threw up from all the alcohol I’d consumed on an empty stomach. I washed my face, then slipped on my dress and coat and had the front desk call me a cab home. And, well, that’s all I remember,” she said.

“I’m so sorry,” she said quietly, turning to Andrea. “I initially had no reason to contact him, and then by the time I found out I was pregnant, I had no way of finding him. I don’t even remember what color hair he had,” she said, crying quietly.

Andrea hugged her and took her face in her hands, smiling. “I’ll never understand why it was so hard for you to say that, but thank you,” she said, kissing her.

Miranda wiped her eyes and laid her head on Andrea’s shoulder, looking up at the girls. “Girls, can you forgive me—for not setting a very good example, and for keeping this from you?”

“Mom, of course,” Cassidy said, climbing up on the bed and hugging Miranda from behind.

Caroline nodded her head and sat next to Miranda. “I’m sorry I brought this up, Mom. I didn’t mean to make you so upset.”

Miranda rolled her eyes. “Bobbsey, I should have told you long ago. You were right—I haven’t really been treating you two like adults. I’ve made plenty of questionable decisions, and if talking about it can help you to make better choices, that’s what we’ll do. Come here,” she said, pulling her daughters into a big hug.

Andrea cleared her throat and said she needed to send a few quick emails to her assistant, letting her know that she wouldn’t be going into the office today. Caroline and Cassidy offered to go downstairs and make lunch, giving the two women some time alone.

Miranda found Andrea in the study and sat next to her on the couch. “I can’t tell you how much better I feel after telling you that,” she said, taking a deep breath. “I never realized how much guilt I was carrying around.”

Andrea smiled as she closed her laptop and set it on the coffee table. “I’m a little relieved, maybe. You have no idea what’s been going through my mind these past ten years,” she said.

“Really? Like what?” Miranda asked.

“Well, for one, any time you mentioned a meeting or dinner with one of the guys on the Board, I found myself analyzing their facial structure and hair color and trying to figure out if the girls looked like any of them.”

Miranda covered her face with her hands. “Are you terribly upset with me?”

“For overreacting about Caroline, yes. For not telling me about the twins’ father, no. But, I doubt this will keep my mind from wandering every time I see you with a handsome man.”
“Well, now we can at least talk about it. I have to admit I’ve had those thoughts, too. Especially if someone approaches me as if they know me but I don’t remember them—which, as you know, happens a lot,” Miranda said.

Andrea laughed. “I think it’s good that you told the girls.”

“I think so, too,” Miranda said. “They have your blood type, you know.”

“Cate and Callie?”

Miranda nodded. “A negative.”

“What are you?”

“O positive,” she said. “I’m sure they’re going to ask about their father someday. When they discover that it’s—how did Caroline say it—biologically impossible that you’re the other parent.”

“I know. And we’ll have to tell them something. Let’s just cross that bridge when we come to it,” Andrea said. “Let’s go downstairs and have something to eat.”

“Wait,” Miranda said. “Are you sure we’re okay?”

Andrea watched her closely. “We are. I think there’s a little bit more, but I trust that you’ll tell me when you’re ready.”

“No,” Miranda said. “I mean, can we just finish talking about it now? This is a conversation I’m not too keen on revisiting.”

“Speak now or forever hold your peace?” Andrea said with a smirk.

“Something like that,” Miranda said, curling up against Andrea’s chest. “I’m so conflicted about all of this. I spent months hating myself for being so reckless. I’m fifty years old and I had drunken sex with a stranger. Teenagers make mistakes like that, not fifty-year-olds. I never thought I would be able to face the girls if they knew what happened. And—what if the girls would have looked like him?”

“Miranda, why didn’t you talk to me?”

“I couldn’t. Don’t you see? I was so ashamed…but the thought of those two pure, perfect little baby girls gave me hope. And you—I didn’t think you’d stay. I was mortified when you asked me about the father, and I thought for sure you’d want no part of all this. And then, you did stay, and you never asked me again. After all that, I didn’t want to risk bringing it up because I didn’t want to risk losing you.”

“But I told you I wasn’t leaving,” Andrea said.

“I know. I would have told me that, too. But, I don’t think I could have followed through.”

“Miranda, I feel as if by being supportive, I’ve only made it more difficult for you emotionally. Tell me what I can do,” Andrea said.

Miranda kissed her and wrapped her arms tightly around the woman’s shoulders. “You are doing it, darling. You’re loving my daughters. You’re a wonderful parent—the best co-parent I could ask for. You must know I didn’t mean what I said before.”

“I know. We all say things we don’t mean when we’re upset,” Andrea said. “How would you like
to get out of the house for a little bit and take a walk with me?”

Miranda sat up and wiped her eyes. “Okay,” she said. They stood from the couch and made their way to the foyer where Miranda pulled her dark sunglasses from her bag and headed out to the front steps.

Andrea quickly ducked her head into the kitchen. “We’re going for a walk. If we aren’t home, please pick up your sisters at school. Half past three, but you’ll need to give yourselves extra time because of the resurfacing on Broadway,” she said.

“Got it, Mom. We’ll take care of it,” Caroline said.

Andrea smiled and her eyes welled up. Cassidy and Caroline hardly ever called her that. “Don’t get into any trouble while we’re out. If you’re going to be stupid,” she said, “well, you know the rest.” She quickly grabbed her phone and ran out to meet Miranda on the front porch.

They walked to Central Park in silence. There was no need to discuss whether to take 3rd Avenue to 72nd Street or to cut across 63rd Street and follow 5th Avenue all the way. There was no need for small talk, for holding hands, for discussing the weather. After ten years, they found that words weren’t always necessary.

Today was one of those days.

They could have discussed their future, shared their thoughts on Caroline’s boyfriend, or their concerns that Cassidy couldn’t settle on an academic major. They could have talked about the girls’ upcoming tenth birthday party, or what they would buy for Ethan, the little boy Serena and Emily were finally able to adopt.

But they didn’t.

Andrea could have spent the time telling Miranda how much she loved her—how she would always love and cherish her. Miranda could have told her how grateful she is each and every day that she has the love of such an incredible woman. They could have discussed moving into a new house with fewer stairs and more bedrooms for when family comes to visit. They could have talked about how pale lavendar was Miranda’s latest favorite color, despite the fact that most women, including herself, were too pale to wear it.

They could have talked about a million things, but instead, they said nothing at all.

On that sunny spring afternoon, walking through Central Park with the love of her life, Miranda Priestly’s heart was filled with an indescribable happiness. When Andrea reached down and laced their fingers together, she knew that she felt it, too.

The End.

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