Call it Love

Deleted Scenes

“I was little surprised to get a call from Daisy last night. She wanted to come by my house at two o’clock this morning.”

“What did you tell her?” A muscle jerked in Spencer’s jaw.

“What could I tell her? I hadn’t heard what had happened. I told her I’d meet her at eight, but you know Daisy. Eight in her world is noon in everyone else’s. She didn’t show so I told the guard she wasn’t allowed on the lot. We’ll see how well that goes.”

\* \* \*

Addison wondered at the knock on her hotel suite door. She hadn’t ordered anything. She crossed the living room to the door and stared through the peephole.

Spencer!

She stepped away and swallowed hard. What was he doing here? She looked again. He looked at the peephole then looked away. He knew she was staring at him. She glanced at her reflection in mirror behind the entrance table. She’d gone for another walk in the rain and hadn’t bothered to fix her hair, though she’d dried it when she returned. Now, it stuck out around her head like a halo of tangles.

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In front of the hotel, a mime wearing tails and red striped socks and a fake mustache dragged a table near the hotel entrance and plopped an umbrella through the center. He set a large cup for tips on the table, draped a linen napkin over his arm and paced back and forth as looking for an audience. The hotel doorman gave him a wave and stepped inside.

Crazy little man, Spencer thought. He’d make no money today.

Spencer moved down the hill. If the mime was desperate enough to work in the rain, Spencer would make sure he didn’t return home empty handed.

A small figure stepped out of the hotel and huddled against the wall beneath the awning. Long glossy hair streamed from a slouchy knit cap and streamed over her shoulders.

Addison.

Spencer sucked cold air through his teeth. Apparently she couldn’t tolerate being cooped up in the hotel and was about to embark on another walk through the rain. something was tucked beneath her arm. Another screenplay perhaps?

The mime swept his hand toward the table and pulled out a chair for her to sit. She shook her head then dug through her pockets. What she pulled out she handed to the mime who smiled with glee and bowed. Spencer couldn’t hear what she said to the mime, but after a moment she rushed down the sidewalk and disappeared inside a coffeeshop.

Spencer hunched his shoulders against the rain and rushed down the hill. The mime saw him and folded his hands prayerfully as if begging Spencer to stop at his table. Spencer stepped beneath the umbrella and pulled a few euros from his wallet. The mime noticed the euros and a broad smile spread over his face. He touched his lip indicating the mime’s moustache and held up the euros.

The mime’s eyes widened, and he clapped his hands over his mouth. Spencer pulled another bill from his wallet. The mime tipped his head as if

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\* \* \*“Five minutes.” The assistant director’s voice floated over the hum of conversations and equipment maneuvers.

Five minutes and she would stand under the hot lights. The makeup artist would dab powder and color to her face, her shoulders and her décolleté. The hair stylist would run a flat iron over her dark hair. The wardrobe tech would steam wrinkles from her form fitting gown.

While the crew fluffed and powdered and inspected her, she would feel like a movie star, not the extra with the forgettable face in crowd scenes, and pretend she was preparing to kiss Spencer Kingsley. Working as a stand-in was her job, a job she liked most of the time, except the kissing scenes.

Before coming to Hollywood, she’d only kissed her high school prom date which hadn’t been great. Being a stand-in taught her just how bad a kiss could be.

She stared across the set and watched Brad pull at the turnover collar of his dress shirt. Even from this distance, she could she his Adam’s apple bob. Except for the fuller face and narrower shoulders, he could pass for Spencer as she could practically pass for Spencer’s costar Mary Wayne. Many tourists often confused her for the A-lister, and it made her giggle when they asked for her autograph.

\* \* \* Addison dragged her gaze from Spencer to see the makeup artist, the hair stylist and the wardrobe tech stood in the middle of the set and stared at her. So did everyone.

She gasped and the heat in her face caught fire. She lifted the gown that hid her worn tennis shoes and wove through the crowd to the mark on the floor where she stood while the team perfected her hair, make up and gown. They moved away, and the technical crew held meters around her, stared at the lights and spoke into headsets. Some lights dimmed while others brightened. Group after group after group surrounded her, ran technical tests, then disappeared.

She stood in the middle of the set. Where was Brad? She wanted to look around but didn’t dare. She barely breathed. Everything was set for the shooting. One wrong move and the team would be called in again for adjustments.

And the director would yell at her. And maybe have her band from the lot. No one broke the rules.

\* \* \* He stopped in front of a door halfway down the hall.

Before she could call out his name, he pressed a finger to his lips, then stared at the door.

What was he hiding? She’d tell him Mirabelle wanted him to make his announcement, and then hurry to the ballroom. She was glad to help his grandmother, but she’d been hired to serve guests. Until she was making more money as an actress, she needed these catering jobs. On tiptoe she rushed toward him.

When she reached him, he frowned at her and gave his head one sharp shake. What was happening? Why couldn’t she speak? She looked at the door, which had caught his attention, but it seemed rather ordinary.

“Oh, yes,” came a woman’s breathy voice. Not just a woman’s voice. Daisy’s voice.

Fear came up from deep inside Addison, gripping her by the throat. What was happening on the other side of the door?

A man moaned.

“Don’t … stop …” Daisy murmured, followed by more male moaning.

Spencer yanked open the door.

Daisy leaned against the wall of janitor’s closet, her neck arched, her mussed hair flopping over her face, which went from white to red.

Addison gasped and stepped backward almost dropping all the hors d’oeuvres on tray to the floor. A muscle pulsed in Spencer’s jaw.

Daisy jerked her head to the door, the pleasure in her face twisted into horror. She slammed her heel into the man trailing kisses down her neck and knocked him to the opposite wall.

Not just any man. Brad. The man Addison was supposed to kiss during the scene test.

Air burst from his lungs. He slid to the floor and shook his head. “What the—” When he saw Spencer, fear froze in his face.

“Spencer, darling,” Daisy said breathlessly. She flashed her camera-ready smile, adjusted her gown, and smoothed her hair. “I’ve been looking for you.”

“In the closet?” Spencer’s voice was flat.

“I didn’t know where to begin to look. You’ve been gone for so long.” She looked so innocent, Addison could almost believe her. “This nice young man was helping me.”

Brad dropped to his elbows and army-crawled out of the closet. In the hallway, he jumped to his feet and ran.

Spencer looked after Brad in disgust, before turning back to Daisy, whose hair had been sleeked and dress smoothed. She gave Addison a disdainful glance and moved into the hallway. Smiling at Spencer, she took his hand.

“Now that I’ve found you, let’s make our announcement.” Her voice filled with excitement.

Addison moved away. Spencer had found Daisy. He didn’t need Addison anymore, but could he really forgive Daisy for her indiscretion? And if she’d make out with another man in the janitor’s closet during their engagement party, how would she behave when they finally married?

This marriage was doomed before it began, but Addison had heard enough stories about Hollywood marriages to know that infidelity was the norm.

“There won’t be an announcement tonight,” Spencer said tonelessly.

“Spencer,” Daisy gasped and touched fingers to her blotchy décolleté.

“Or any other night.” Spencer’s eyes darkened.

Daisy’s lovely face contorted with rage. “How dare you! After what I’ve done for you and your career.”

Addison stared at the socialite, stunned. What had Daisy done for Spencer? He’d been world famous for years when they started dating, at least according the gossip sites.

Spencer gave a dry laugh. “Leave it to you to say what I expected. What you think doesn’t matter to me. I suggest you find your friend.” He glanced down the hallway where Brad had disappeared through the door. “And finish what you started. Now that we’re no longer together, there’s no reason for you to be discreet.

\* \* \*

Where had he come from? And where was he going?

A breathless Daisy rushed toward him. “Spencer, wait.”

He turned to her. “There you are. I’m on my way to the Valentino room. Why don’t you join me?” His voice sounded flat, not like someone who was about to announce his engagement to the world.

“I just spoke with Howie. Did you know he’s thinking of changing my part?” Daisy’s voice rose with each word.

\* \* \*

Addison sucked in a breath. Effie had said Howie and Spencer wanted to meet with her tomorrow. Addison had been surprised when she mentioned the actress he’d hired for the role might not work out and wanted to discuss a part with her. As if realizing she said too much, she begged Addison not to repeat what she said. Addison wouldn’t but she was very curious about her meeting with Howie. Now Daisy said her part would be changed. Was Daisy the actress who hadn’t worked out? She’d heard the crew complain when she was late for scenes which was nearly every day.

“He mentioned it. We’ll meet with him tomorrow. He can tell us what he’s thinking.”

“I want to know. I’m going to find him.” she strode past him.

“Daisy.” Spencer sounded weary. “Don’t.”

She froze in her tracks and stared at Spencer. “You know something.”

“I don’t know anything. You know Howie doesn’t discuss production with me.” He looked exasperated.

“But you’re getting a percentage of the cut.” She gave him a wary look.

“That doesn’t mean I know what decisions he’s making.”

At that moment, the doors to the ballroom swung open. Revelry escaped through the gap and filled the corridor. Howie peeked around the door. When he saw them he started to wave at them with the drink in his hand.

“Howie, I want to talk to you.” Daisy called out to him.

“We’ll talk tomorrow.” Howie started to turn away.

Addison backed away. Whatever Spencer knew, she didn’t want to be present when he told Daisy. Judging from Spencer’s face, it wouldn’t be something Daisy would like.

Daisy noticed. “Am I about to be fired?”

“We have guests waiting. Let’s greet them. Howie can wait until tomorrow.” He held out his hand indicating she should come with him.

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“And what will you do? Hook up with her?” Daisy jerked her head toward Addison. “So you can finish what you are started on the set?”

“Finish what?” Rage roiled through Addison. “There’s nothing going on between us.”

\* \* \* *Is this a picture of you?* A string of emojis followed the question mark.

Addison twisted the corner of her mouth. How would Stella get a picture of her and not recognize her? She was about to shove her phone back into her pocket—she had to get to the set, or she’d be locked out.

The picture popped into view. Spencer’s powerful build filled the screen, his hand pressed into the back of a woman who looked half his size and wore a shimmering gown. Her hair flowed over her shoulders. Surrounding them were slack jawed crew members and jean-clad extras.

Beneath the photo read the caption, “*Spencer Kingsley seems to be enjoying himself too much. What will Daisy Winkle say?*

“What is it?” Effie frowned at her and tugged the dress around her narrow waist.

Addison mouth dropped open. Her heart beat like a drum inside her chest. She’d signed a nondisclosure agreement. If the studio thought she’d leaked pictures of herself with Spencer, they’d kick her off the set … and maybe worse.

Another photo filled her screen. How many were there?

Photos from every angle, including floor and ceiling shots scrolled across her screen. Her heart thrashed in a wave of panic.

Would admin think she took these pictures? Surely, they’d understand She hoped Spencer wouldn’t see these. She didn’t want him to think she was using a test screen to gain stardom. Actors used all sorts tricks to gain attention.

Addison would not do that. She wanted to be known as a serious actress not one who manipulated the press.

She stared helplessly at the photos that continued to pop onto her phone’s screen. She had a feeling it was too late for that.

\* \* \*

She texted Effie to let her know that she had left the hotel and would be staying with a friend for the next few days but would explain everything to her when she saw her on the set. Of course, Effie would know everything by the time Addison arrived at the studio tomorrow. Everyone in the film industry read everything that pertained to movies and television and streaming sites. The breaking of Spencer’s engagement to Daisy had to be the top search item.

\* \* \*

“Addie.” Addison heard Effie’s voice.

Addison looked around and saw Effie, her short curls bouncing around her head, weave through the crowd toward her. Addison waved at her.

“I got your texts.” Effie was breathless. “Why did Howie fire you? And where were you last night?” Her gaze drifted to Spencer then Mirabelle and her eyes widened before clouding with confusion.

“It’s a long story.” Addison squeezed Effie’s hand. “I’ll explain everything.” By the time she did that, Effie would have heard what had happened … or at least one version of what had happened. “I have a meeting.” How did she explain she was auditioning for the part Daisy had until last night? “I’ll come find you afterward.”

“Sure.” Effie couldn’t stop staring at Mirabelle and Spencer who smiled at her.

“And this is Mirabelle Kingsley and her great grandson Spencer.” Addison felt ridiculous introducing her friend to two of the most famous people in Hollywood, but Effie was her best friend and Addison wanted her to have the same opportunity she was about to have.

“Sure.” Effie’s mouth gaped when she shook Spencer’s then Mirabelle’s hand.

Spencer greeted Effie warmly then extended his arm in the direction he and Addison should proceed for the audition.

“You go on ahead.” Mirabelle looked at the set milling with people. “I’m going to say hello to a few friends and make some new ones.” She looped an arm through Effie’s. “I know we’re going to be fast friends. How about you introduce me to some of yours?”

“Sure.” Effie looked over her shoulder at Addison before escorting Mirabelle to a group she and Addison usually met with on the set.

\* \* \* turned to them. A worried look on his face, his eyes shifted to the leaded glass doors. “Mr. Kingsley, I think it might be better if you use the rear entrance.”

“What’s going on?” Lines creased Spencer’s smooth brow and his gaze followed the doorman’s.

“A group has gathered outside along the sidewalk in front the of the hotel. They’ve been chanting for a while and waving signs.” He coughed into a closed fist. “They don’t seem to happy about something that happened between you and Miss Winkle, sir.”

“But nothing happened.” He looked at the doorman, his expression bemused.

Addison’s peered through the beveled glass. Though blurry, she could make out the sea of faces lined along the sidewalk in front of the hotel. White blobs, posted signs, no doubt, bobbed above their heads. The chants floating through the entrance were garbled though she did understand Spencer and Daisy’s names and other words like unfaithful. She recognized more colorful words and flushed. Did they think Spencer had been unfaithful to Daisy? Her liaisons were tabloid headlines, something, she’d laugh about whenever the media questioned her. Surely the group outside the hotel didn’t blame Spencer for Daisy’s dalliances.

“Did you call the police?” Spencer asked the doorman but stared through the glass.

“The hotel admin did,” the doorman said. “But that was a while ago. I don’t understand why it’s taking so long for them to get here.”

“Where did all these people come from?” Addison couldn’t stop staring at the blurred images through the glass. Her skin tightened when shouts rose.

“I suspect Daisy’s PR firm is working hard to make sure she doesn’t get blamed for our canceled engagement.” He opened the door a crack. “Which could damage her reputation with the studio.”

“What are you doing?” Panic dug into Addison’s chest and she laid a hand on his arm. “You can’t go out there. They’ll tear you to pieces.”

He looked at her shock flickering in his eyes before it segued into grateful amusement.

“I have to find out why they’re angry. I’m sure they’ll listen to reason.” Grinning, his hand reached toward her face.

Already Addison’s body prepared for a wave of comforting heat from his touch. His smile froze and his hand dropped to his side.

Regret was a mournful whisper rushing through her. Why would he touch her? How ridiculous that she thought he would.

“I agree with Addison.” Mirabelle rolled her chair closer to the door, the corners of her mouth tight with concern. When the shouts rose, her face set and she looked at the door—the only protection between them and the crowd gathering in front of the hotel.

Shouts crescendoed. More people swarmed onto the sidewalk.

“Where are all these people coming from?” Addison stared at the blurred masses stretching past the door’s width.

“They’re being bussed in, and probably paid an attractive wage,” Spencer said tonelessly. “Money talks. It’s easy to get a crowd if the participants receive a generous payout. Just like when making a movie. For the right price, a studio has no problem finding a crew and cast.” His hand on the door, he looked over his shoulder at her.

“Please don’t go out there, Spencer.” Addison’s voice was a rough whisper.

Looking at her, surprise flickered over his face. Was he surprised that she cared about his welfare? She would care about anyone’s welfare.

Something had stirred the crowd outside the hotel. Their screams and shots froze her blood. Mirabelle and Spencer looked as stunned as she felt. He was known for making himself available to fans—signing autographs for those who gathered outside the studio. The people outside the door didn’t sound like autograph seekers.

“You don’t know who’s out there and you don’t know if they have something devious planned,” Addison said. Wild fear pounded in her chest. If he didn’t listen to reason, she’d drag him away from the door. Didn’t he realize not everyone was reasonable?

He still looked as if he considered going outside and talking to the protestors.

His gaze moved between Addison and his grandmother. “You’re.” Releasing a heavy breath, he moved away from the door, the tension in his shoulders visibly draining. “It isn’t fair that I put you and Gran at risk.” Pulling his phone from his pocket, he turned to the doorman whose face had paled. “Where is a safe place for my driver to pick us up?”

“In the back alley. It’s a secured area, but I’ll tell the guard to give him access.” The doorman’s voice shook slightly. “I’ll take you there. We’ll have to take the service elevator.”

“As long as it accommodates my grandmother’s wheelchair, I don’t care how we get there.” Spencer’s mouth set.

“It won’t be a problem, sir.” The doorman glanced at Mirabelle’s wheelchair. “Follow me.”

Addison watched the doorman lead Spencer and Mirabelle across the lobby. She hoped they’d leave the hotel safely.

Spencer glanced at his grandmother then looked over his shoulder at Addison. A frown pressed between his brows. “You’re coming with us.”

“There’s no need. No one knows who I am.” He had said he’d help her with her lines, but he had to protect Mirabelle. She could rehearse her lines on her own, if she really would be considered for Daisy’s part in the film, which she still had trouble believing. Granted, Spencer rehearsing with her would help her get the part, but Spencer and Mirabelle’s safety was more important than any part she’d receive.

“I’m not taking that chance,” Spencer said. Moving toward her, he took her arm and trailed his fingers to her hand.

Her breath caught at the tenderness in his touch.

“My grandson is right, Addison.” Mirabelle’s face spread into the dazzling smile so reminiscent of her Hollywood Golden Years. “We can’t assume anything, especially when someone as volatile as Daisy Winkle is involved. I won’t feel peace until I know you’re safe.”

“But why would anyone, least of all Daisy, want to do anything to me?” Addison said. She was nobody and wasn’t worth Daisy’s effort to harm her or ruin her reputation. Addison had no reputation where Hollywood was concerned.

“Then let’s play it safe. You shouldn’t go home tonight. I have a place where you can stay,” Spencer said. “And we need to go over your lines for tomorrow’s screen test.”

“Honest, that isn’t necessary. No one will go to my home and I can learn my lines. I have the script at home, so I know which lines are Daisy’s,” Addison said. If she did have a screen test, but she couldn’t imagine the producers casting her in Daisy’s role. The part needed someone glamorous. All the makeup in the world wouldn’t make Addison glamorous.

“Humor me,” Spencer said. The serious look in his eyes made her heart stall. Why would he care? But she saw it in his eyes. He cared.

\* \* \*“All right.” She gave a soft exhale. “But can you at least take me by my place? I’d like to get some clothes and other things in case they ask me to do a screen test.”

“I have everything you need, but I’ll agree. We should drive by your place. I want to make sure that your home is safe,” Spencer said. The intensity in his eyes gave her a jolt.

Why would he think someone would want to harm her? The discomfort roiling through her stomach made her breathing slow. He knew Daisy better. Would Daisy be vindictive against someone she barely knew? Maybe this was a chance Addison shouldn’t take. But if there was a problem at her home, this would put Spencer and Mirabelle at risk. And what of her roommates and neighbors? She had to make sure everyone would be safe.

“Yes, we need to drive by there.” Tension mounted in Addison’s chest. “I want to make sure my roommate and my neighbors are fine.”

“I agree.” Spencer gave her hand a gentle tug and she fell into step beside him. “I’ll hire a service to sit outside the building. If anything happens, the patrol will call the police and notify me of any precautions we need to make. Your roommates will be safe, so no more worrying, all right?”

“You’re scaring me.” She took a shaky breath.

“That’s was never my intention.” His voice was low, apologetic.

Looking into his eyes, she saw that he truly cared about her roommates, maybe almost as much as she did.

“Now let’s leave.” Spencer’s voice was controlled but firm. “Once that group finds out I’ve left, they’ll leave. My friends are celebrating, and I don’t want them to have to worry about anything.”

Addison nodded. They had to get away from this place. This rollercoaster ride of a day had whipped her through more emotions than she thought possible. She hoped Spencer was right and that once they left the hotel this angry crowd will calm. Spencer’s limousine drove slowly past Addison’s apartment building. Relief filled her knowing that no crowd stood on the sidewalk. The security guard’s car was parked on the other side of the street. The neighborhood was quiet, and Addison hoped it would stay that way.

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The backdoor flew open and a young man wearing a black chauffeur’s suit and cap dashed inside. The pocket on the front of his suit had been torn. From the door opening floated shouts. Glimpses of bouncing picket signs appeared as the door drifted shut.

“Mr. Kingsley, you don’t want to go out there.” The chauffeur help up his hands as if to stop them.

“What’s happening?” Spencer wrapped an arm around Addison’s waist and pulled her close. The muscles in his arm went ridged and locked her close to his side. He looked past the chauffeur to the door.

Addison’s heart hammered. Who was shouting? What was written on the picket signs? Were the protestors angry with her? The fear that had pumped through her last night returned hotter and more terrifying.

“A bunch of demonstrators.” The chauffeur was breathless and leaned a hand against the wall. “They want Daisy Winkle restored her movie role.”

“She’ll stop at nothing.” A muscle locked in Spencer’s jaw. “How did they even get on the lot let alone to this entrance?”

“I’m not sure.” The chauffeur glanced over his shoulder as if expecting them to burst through the door. “There wasn’t a guard standing outside. I finally got someone to open this door and call the police. When I got out of the car, I was attached, and they ripped my jacket.”

“I’ll make sure Daisy pays for your jacket.” Spencer growled.

“They were saying one other thing.” The chauffeur looked at them confused. “They were demanding that someone named Addison Duvall be fired. Who’s Addison Duvall?”

Chapter

Blood rushed through Addison’s ears. She heard nothing else the chauffeur said. the demonstrators wanted her fired from the set? How did the protestors even know she had a role?

“I’m Addison Duvall.” Her voice was flat. She didn’t look at the chauffeur but stared at the door—seeing but not seeing. “But how could anyone know I was hired to replace Daisy? I told no one. Everyone on the set signs a non-disclosure agreement.” None of her friends would’ve said anything. Leaking Addison’s replacement of Daisy would cost them their jobs and word spread. If one studio wouldn’t hire them, other studios would learn why and follow suit.

“No doubt your agent issued a press release before you even signed the contract.” Spencer’s voice was deep, urgent in a way she hadn’t heard before.

“What if I hadn’t signed?” How could her agent do something without her permission?

Because she wasn’t famous. Had that press release been in her contract? She’d only skimmed the legalese, most of which she didn’t understand.

Spencer arched a brow at her.

“Right.” She had a part, her first speaking role. Of course, she’d sign.

Sirens sounded followed by a deep voice amplified by a bull horn.

“Do you want me to see what’s going on?” the chauffeur asked. He looked frightened as if knowing Spencer would say yes, which might mean he’d be attacked again.

“You’ve been through enough,” Spencer said. “Go to the studio offices and have tell them Spencer Kingsley said to make sure you’re fully compensated for this treatment and one of the studio drivers is to take you home.

“Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.” Looking relieved, the driver backed away from them before sprinting down the corridor.

Spencer glanced down at Addison. “Stay here,” he said and strode down the rear door.

“I will not. Those protestors are here because of me.” She rushed after him. “I don’t want anyone else to be hurt. If I can talk to them—”

“You will not talk to them.” His voice was soft. His glare made her freeze. “They’re irrational. They won’t listen to reason.”

“You think they’ll treat you any differently?” Remembering the chauffeur’s pale face and torn jacket made her sick. Didn’t these people realize what they’d done to another human being? “I’m going to the door.”

“Then stay behind me.” His mouth set in a grim line. “There’s no telling what they’ll do if they see you.”

“I have to—”

“I’ve agreed that you can come with me.” His eyes blazed. His tone sounded like grinding rocks. “When I open that door, don’t say a word.”

Looking into his eyes, she swallowed hard. “We’ll see.” Good. She sounded calm.

He gave an exasperated exhale and strode to the door. She moved next to him down the hall. She reached for the door. He extended his arm blocking hers. He shot her a dark look. She struggled to hold her temper and breathed deeply. Her gaze moving to his hand, she watched him open the door.

The protestors had quieted, though several yelled and cursed the police who guided zip tied protestors into paddy wagons. Some lay on the concrete, their hands bound behind them. Picket signs lay in piles. Some leaned against the building. The limousine, its windows broken, and tires slashed, had been pushed against a brick wall that had been spray painted with profanity and obscene graphics. Addison’s stomach churned.

“Oh,” Addison said in shock, her gaze scanning the disarray. “Why would these people cause so much damage for someone they don’t know?”

“Daisy has quite a following. People care about her even though they don’t know her and will do what they think necessary to exact justice. For others, the price is right.” Spencer scanned the turmoil, a disgusted look on his face.

“What do you mean by price?” Realization slowly dawned in her mine. Horror sunk talons into her chest. “You mean these people were paid to come here and protest?” Who would pay other people to wreak havoc? Who would accept payment?

“You didn’t know?” Spencer shot her a look of disbelief.

“I had no idea.” She shook her head slowly.

“Welcome to the seamier side of life.” His face tight, he wrapped sinewy fingers around her arm and jerked her close.

“Spencer,” she said in a strained whisper. Her head snapped backward, and she crashed into his rock hard chest air shooting out of her lungs.

The whistle past her ear shot fear up her spine. A splintering bash filled the room.

Addison swallowed a scream and flattened herself against Spencer as if she could hide inside him. His arms enveloped her, and he whirled her around. She felt him jerk, and a door slamming echoed inside her head. She went cold and squeezed her eyes tight while trying to still the trembling in her body.

“It’s okay. It’s okay.” Spencer’s soothing voice seeped through the fear that strangled her. His powerful hand smoothed over her head and down her hair. His touch was more than reassuring. There was something deeper, something that warmed her.

Taking small sips of air, she listened to the soothing words and allowed his calmness to wash over her.

From outside, the shouting softened. The pounding in her chest eased, and she leaned away from him. Tipping her head back, she looked into his eyes.

He dropped his gaze to hers, his smile tentative. “Are you all right?” His voice was gravelly.

“Yes.” She nodded though she wasn’t sure that was true. “What happened?” She glanced at the now closed door. “I felt something move past me.”

He lifted his chin to the wall behind her. Turning she saw a splintered hole. Shattered drywall and wood lay at the base.

She released a trembling sigh and shook her head. “Why?”

“Sometimes, people’s emotions get away from them.” He turned her away from the wall. “People like Daisy are there to take advantage of that. Let’s get out of here.”

“How?” The image of the destroyed limousine flashed in her mind. “And to where?” What if these people followed her? She couldn’t go to her apartment. She wouldn’t endanger her roommates.

The police had arrested some of the protestors, but what if they had friends? Granted, they wouldn’t do much harm to Mirabelle’s home, which was surrounded by a wall and monitored by a security service and surveillance cameras, though the protestors did sneak onto the studio lot and cause damage before the police arrived. Addison’s apartment wasn’t secured. It didn’t have security cameras. An internet search would reveal where Addison lived. She winced at the damage the protestors could cause and the fear her roommates would experience.

“I can’t go home,” Addison said.

“I agree.” Spencer’s eyes turned hard. “You’ll stay with me at Gran’s place.”

“I can’t do that. I won’t put you and your grandmother in danger.” She tried to pull away, but he held her firm.

“We have the protection we need. Until a new cause distracts this group, you’ll stay with us. I won’t risk you’re going home where some deranged person can find out where you live and cause you and anyone near you harm.” When she opened her mouth to protest, he touched a finger to her lips. “The security service is still stationed outside your apartment building. It’s settled. I won’t accept any argument.

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At Mirabelle’s house, a security guard’s van sat near the entrance. Two uniformed guards, one man and one woman, stood by the entrance. They nodded when the limousine passed through the gates.

Addison’s mouth dried. How had her life come to this? Two days ago, she was a struggling actress in a town of struggling actresses. Because of a test scene with a famous movie star she’d been catapulted into the limelight—a Hollywood storybook tale which turned into a nightmare.

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She’d have to find her own place. With roommates? And endanger them? She couldn’t afford to live alone. And what about the danger she could bring to her neighbors?

The rear door to the limousine opened and the driver offered her his hand. Spencer touched the small of her back and guided her up the stone steps and through the front door. Mirabelle, dressed in a satin robe with matching slippers, moved into the foyer. Lynn followed her.

“Thank goodness your home.” Mirabelle clutched the front of her robe. Her expression wavered between relief and fear. “I saw the television news. They kept changing every minute. I didn’t know what happened. I didn’t know what to believe. And then Daisy was on the national news giving a statement.”

Addison jerked her gaze to Mirabelle. Daisy gave an interview?

“Interview?” Spencer gave a derisive laugh. “Why did the media want to talk to her? Never, mind. They wanted a statement, which the studio won’t give, so naturally they searched for someone who would. I shouldn’t be surprised.”

“I’m so glad you canceled your engagement to that woman.” Mirabelle laid a hand on the foyer table.

“Don’t waste your time thinking about her.” Spencer moved to her and rested his hands on her shoulders. He was twice her size and made her look doll like. “Let’s focus on the good. There’s plenty of that.”

Mirabelle’s gaze flickered to Addison. “Yes, there is much to be thankful for.”

“No more worrying.” Spencer tipped his head to look into Mirabelle’s eyes.

“No more worrying. You’re home and you’re safe. That’s all I ask for.” She turned away and stepped across the foyer with the energy of a twenty year old. “Did you eat? I’m sure you didn’t. Come into the kitchen. I’ll make you a sandwich.”

“You’ll do no such thing. It’s late and time for you to go to bed.” Spencer’s laugh mixed with annoyance. “If we need something to eat, we’ll make it ourselves.”

“Come, Miss Mirabelle.” Lynn stood next to her. “I’ll help you get settled.”

“I know how to go to bed.” Mirabelle’s eyes flashed. “But if you want to walk me upstairs, I’ll humor you.” She turned to Spencer. “And I want you to tell me everything in the morning.”

“If I knew everything, I would.” Spencer gave a brittle laugh. “I’ll call Howie tomorrow morning. I’m sure by then the truth will have wheedled itself through this morass of rumors.”

“One would hope.” Mirabelle slowly shook her head. “I’ll see you at breakfast.” With Lynn at her side, she climbed the stairs.

“Gran did have one good idea. Since we missed dinner, how about I fix a couple of sandwiches for us?” Spencer looked at Addison, his eyes soft and reassuring, and lifted a brow.

“I have no appetite.” She touched a hand to her stomach that felt heavy with confusion. What was happening to her life? How had wanting to be an actress made people hate her, people who didn’t even know her?

“This will all blow over.” Spencer trailed his hands over her shoulders and down her arms.

She hoped her smile looked reassuring because she’d never been filled with such doubt.

“I’ll walk you upstairs.” Spencer touched her elbow.

She walked next to him. When they reached top of the stairs, he pressed his lips to her forehead.

“Go to bed. Don’t think about this anymore.” His voice was gentle yet strong.

“How can I—”

He touched a finger to her lips. “I promise. I won’t let anything happen to you. Trust me.”

Trust him. Somehow she knew she could.

\* \* \*

Only now did he realize walking away from Daisy wouldn’t be as easy as he thought. No matter. He’d offer Daisy what most people couldn’t resist—money. Not the same as marriage, but when she realized she’d only money and nothing else, she’d accept the payout and move on.

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Something hard gripped Addison’s stomach, and her gaze dropped to Mirabelle. The memory of Spencer finding Daisy in a closet with one of the background actors flashed through her mind. Her pulse ratcheted

“I have to find her.”.

“I’m sure it’s perfectly innocent.” Mirabelle’s smile slowly seeped from her face, and she shook her head.

“You stay here. I’ll find her.”

“I don’t think we need to look for her.” Mirabelle nodded to the other side of the terrace.

Spencer stood in front of a concrete railing, his shoulders rigid, his hands braced on the balustrade. He stared at something in the darkness below.

“I’ll go to him.” Addison gave Mirabelle’s hand a quick squeeze.

“Good idea.” Disappointment clouded Mirabelle’s face but Addison knew what the famous film star was thinking.

Addison skirted through the crowd. When she neared Spencer, he turned to her.

“Is everything all right?” Her gaze locked into his, she slowed her pace.

“See for yourself.” He tipped his head toward the darkness pulsing behind the balustrade.

Addison moved to the railing. On the landing below stood Lena, her face twisted with anger. Behind her, a figure raced into the darkness.

“It was a misunderstanding,” Lena said. “I’ll explain everything on the way home.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Spencer said tonelessly. “We won’t be going home together.”

\* \* \*

latched onto someone else at his premiere party. He seemed relieved.

“We were getting ready to leave and wanted to let you know.”

“And now I do. What are you going to do, Spencer? Leave me here?” Lena’s tone rose with each word.

“No,” Spencer said. “The limo will take you wherever you want to go. We’ll find another way home.”

“Fine, then you can call me in the morning.” Lena ran fingers through her hair “We can meet for brunch, and I’ll explain why this is a simple misunderstanding.”

“No, Lena. I’m not interested in your explanations.” He moved away from the wall.

“You’ll change your mind,” Lena called after him.

Spencer didn’t respond.

\* \* \*

that she lived in the center of the Hollywood soundstage her phone and pressed her cellphone to her ear. waited while the makeup artist inspected her face and the stylist smoothed her hair. Around her, cameras were positioned to film *her* scene.

Not exactly her scene. She was an extra and for this film the stand in for movie star Mary Wayne. Once the lights and the cameras were determined, Mary Wayne would film this shot with Hollywood great Spencer Kingsley.

Lucky girl.

Addison was Mary’s stand in, and she’d stand quiet and still for the test scene she’d shoot with Spencer’s stand in, whoever that was. She hadn’t seen him yet.

The crew stepped away but Spencer’s stand in didn’t appear. Where was he? She wanted to get this over with. There was only so long she stand this still and not dare to breathe.

\* \* \*

The blood rushing through her veins caught fire. What were they talking about? The kissing scene? The image of Spencer practicing the kissing scene with her popped into her head. His warm lips, the taste of him, his fresh scent, his arms wrapped around her holding her close, the pounding of his heart echoing inside her chest.

This was nonsense. Spencer was too important and too valuable to practice any scene.

Why was she even thinking about kissing Spencer Kingsley? Even if he weren’t dating British socialite Lady Daisy Winkle, he’d never give a second look at a movie extra. He dated stunning movie stars and heiresses. She should know. She monitored every site that published Hollywood news.

Heat surged into Addison’s checks. Other extras and crew members seemed to notice Spencer’s gaze was directed at her. Some smiled, others exchanged knowing looks to those around them and whispered. She didn’t want to know what they said. She wished she didn’t care. Spencer wouldn’t be interested in her. His girlfriend was gorgeous. Rumor had it, she might be cast in a supporting role for this film.

Now the media outlets buzzed with news that tonight Spencer and Daisy would host a bash at the exclusive Beverly Hills hotel, The Palacio, to announce their engagement.

Addison would be there, but not as a guest. She’d be a server—one of the many jobs she scrounged to pay the rent on her studio apartment.

“Places, everyone, places.” Howie’s voice floated over the crew.

Where was Spencer’s stand in? The crew couldn’t shoot the test scene without his stand in.

All morning she’d mentally prepared herself for the kiss she’d suffer through. She’d kissed a lot of frogs since coming to Hollywood, but she had to be accommodating. How else would she get a speaking part?

Something moved in front of her. She pulled herself from her reverie and stared at the broad chest covered by the most exquisitely tailored tuxedo she’d ever seen. Her gaze traveled up a set of pearl buttons and a starched shirt to a silk bowtie, to a chiseled jaw, a rakish smile and the enigmatic blue eyes of Spencer Kingsley.

Confusion rose up. Shock tumbled through her chest. Was Spencer his own stand in?

“I didn’t see him on the set. Did something happen to him? Why did you stand in for your own scene?” She sucked in a soft breath. He was a famous movie star, too famous to stand under bright lights just to test settings.

“They couldn’t get the lighting right for the scene. Rather than waste time to test more settings, which hadn’t been working, I said I’d stand in.”

\* \* \*

It doesn’t work that way.” Spencer gave her a sympathetic look. We can contact your agent and have him call Effie. She’s Howie’s assistant. She can schedule the audition.”

We’re announcing our engagement tonight. I should be considered for that role.” Blood drained from her face. “I mean didn’t …” She reached for Spencer.

He uttered a soft laugh. “I know what you meant.” He didn’t look hurt. He looked accepting. “Unfortunately, dating me doesn’t guarantee you a role in my film. I’m sorry if that disappoints you.”

“But what about your other movie? I’d be perfect for the neighbor role. You can help me get that part.” She waved a manicure hand through the air.

“That isn’t how it works.” He spoke as if explaining something to a child. “If you get the role, it will be because of your skill, not who you know.”

“You could do that for me.” Her voice rose with each word and sounded more cockney than cut glass.

“I’m sorry dating me didn’t get you what you wanted.” And Spencer did look sorry.

“Not half as sorry as I am.” Her face hard, she glared at him, then her skin softened. “Maybe we should go to the ballroom and announce our engagement. That is why we invited all our friends to join us this evening.” She gave a nervous laugh

“I believe this announcement was premature.”

“Are you breaking up with me?” A wariness flickered in her eyes. She gave an uneasy laugh. “You know I didn’t mean I thought dating you would help me get movie roles.”

“Actually you were pretty convincing. You might be a better actress than you thought.” He leveled a steady gaze at her. That’s enough.” Spencer’s voice was so sharp it made Daisy jump. “If you need a ride home tonight, I’ll have my driver take you. For now, I suggest you join the party. No one has to know what happened tonight.”

“I’m not staying, and I don’t need a ride.” Daisy huffed. “I’ll page my own driver. Just remember. Someday I’ll be famous, but no one will remember you.”

“I’ll take that has a promise.” Spencer’s mouth curved into smile making him appear the happiest Addison had seen him since their kiss this afternoon.

Daisy’s eyes widened before a scowl lined her face. Tossing her stole around her shoulders, she strode down the corridor.

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A small figure stepped out of the hotel and huddled against the wall beneath the awning. Long glossy hair streamed from a slouchy knit cap and spilled over her shoulders.

Addison.

Spencer sucked cold air through his teeth. Apparently she couldn’t tolerate being cooped up in the hotel and was about to embark on another walk through the rain. Something was tucked beneath her arm. Another screenplay perhaps?

The doorman stepped from the hotel and spoke to her a moment. Whatever he said made her shake her head. She glanced at the sky, opened her umbrella and rushed down the sidewalk. At the end of the block, she huddled beneath an awning emblazoned with a coffee cup, closed her umbrella and stepped into the shop.

Spencer moved from beneath the awning and strode down the sidewalk. If he hadn’t seen her, he could’ve left. Now, he couldn’t leave without talking to her. The joy in her face would be more than enough to erase the dreariness accumulating in his soul. He had no idea what he would say, but he was known for his spontaneity. He’d think of something.

He hoped.

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