CHAPTER 16

*A Wicked Turn of Events*

My hands were shaking as my eyes were glued to his signature at the bottom. I never thought Michael would send me an official certificate of marriage before leaving the country.

“Do I have to sign this now?”
“Yes. It’s scheduled to be couriered overseas by 5pm today.”
“Where is it being mailed?”
“Germany.”

My heart was racing. Michael had arranged for me to sign the certificate and have it sent to him in time for my arrival making our marriage officially legal. The girls heard my reaction and came running to the door. I hid the envelope behind my back.

“What’s wrong, Ana?” Jasmine asked.

“Nothing. I’m fine.”
“Why’d you scream like that?”
“I was just startled about something work related. I’m ok now.”

“Are you sure?”
“I’m fine. Go back to the movie. I’ll be right there.”

They went back to the living room and the postman repeated that he needed me to sign the document right away. He offered me a pen and as I held it, my hands still wouldn’t stop shaking. Something was blocking my thoughts saying not to do it. As much as I wanted to make things official, I knew I had to follow my intuition at that moment.

“I can’t sign this now. I will keep it with me.”
“I was told to deliver it to you and have it sent overseas immediately.”
“I understand. I know where this is going and I’m leaving for Germany tomorrow. I will take care of it myself. Thank you for bringing it to me.”

He asked me to sign a disclosure indicating I received the document, refused to sign it and that it was still in my possession. When he left, I went straight to my room and hid the document in a locked drawer. I didn’t want to tell the girls about it right away because I knew they wouldn’t understand. I was also afraid the media would see my name next to Michael’s on the document and spread it all over the news affecting his tour and my career.

I went back to the girls and they immediately sensed something was wrong.

“What’s going on?”
“Nothing.”
“You seem so shaken.”
“I’m ok. Just nervous about flying tomorrow.”

“We all are, but at least we’ll be together.”
“Well, I’m excited!” Marie said.

“We get to go to Europe again, eat great food, meet great people and help the greatest entertainer in the world with his mind blowing tour!”
“Marie, you are WAY too into this!”

“I know! I love it.”

The girls kept talking about him and all I could do was think about the marriage certificate and why I didn’t sign it. The thought of being his wife scared me again. It seemed like every time I was with him, my worries disappeared but the second I was alone, my reality wouldn’t allow me to see things his way anymore. I wasn’t sure what to do with myself. The stress alone was enough to make me feel sick and sure enough it did. I ran to the bathroom and felt all of my emotions coming out as I vomited. All I could do was sit on the bathroom floor and cry wondering how I ever got myself into this same exact situation all over again.

“Ana, are you alright?” I heard Jasmine say outside the bathroom door. I told her I was but she didn’t believe me and refused to leave the door until I came out.

“I told you I’m fine.”

“No, you’re not. I can see it in your eyes.”
“See what?”
“You’re hiding something.”

“Where’s Marie?”
“She went to the store to get some ice cream, she’ll be back in a while.”
“Jas, I have to show you something.”

We went upstairs to my room and I handed her the envelope. I was expecting her to have a serious reaction but instead, she took the alternate route.

“OH MY GOD ANA! HE’S YOUR HUSBAND!”
“SHHHH!! WILL YOU BE QUIET?”

“WHEN DID YOU GET THIS?”

“Just now. The postman delivered it.”
“Wait. You haven’t signed this.”
“That’s the problem, Jasmine. I don’t want to.”
“WHY NOT?”

“Because I don’t think it’s a good idea.”
“ARE YOU CRAZY?”

I tried explaining my feelings to her but she didn’t understand. All she cared about was his signature at the bottom of the certificate.

“Ana, he wants to marry you.”
“Well, he certainly proved that last night.”
“Huh?”
“We almost did it yesterday.”
“WHY THE HELL DID YOU STOP?”
“I’M NOT TALKING ABOUT SEX, YOU IDIOT!”

“Oh. Oops. Well, what are you talking about?”
“We almost GOT MARRIED last night.”
“WHAAAAAT?”

I told her everything that happened including the episode with Joseph. She was so shocked she had to sit down. I sat next to her on the edge of my bed and she held me from the side.

“I’m scared, Jasmine. I honestly don’t want to lose him but my heart is saying not to go through with this.”

“Ana, you have to do what you think and feel is right. Do you love him?”
“Of course I do.”
“I don’t think that’s true.”
“Jas, how can you say that?”
“Because if you did, you would have signed that certificate and gave it to the postman.”

I realized she may be right.

“Jas, I can’t break his heart. Especially now that I’m expecting his baby again.”
“That reminds me – you really need to tell him your other secret Diana.”
“Please don’t remind me.”
“You know I won’t say anything, but he deserves to know and so does Marie.”
“I know. My plan is to tell them both after his last concert in Europe.”
“I’ll be there next to you when you break the news to him.”
“I love you, Jas.”
“I love you more.”
“You sound just like him now.”
“His love lives in all of us.”

She and I went back to the living room and watched some of Michael’s short films and waited for Marie to get back from the store. When she did, she had all kinds of sweet and savory treats for me to snack on.

“Marie, you will make the baby want junk food all the time.”
“Who cares? You’re eating for two. We need little MJ to be as sweet as his daddy.”
“His daddy doesn’t eat this stuff either.”
“That’s because he’s too busy eating your lips.”
“Shut up, Jas.”

She made me blush and the girls sandwiched me between them on the couch. They tickled me and rubbed my stomach trying to feel the baby moving. I felt blessed to have such great friends. I loved my life the way it was and knew I had to make a decision about what I was going to do about the document hiding in my room.

**\*\*\* SEVERAL HOURS LATER \*\*\***

**LAX AIRPORT, INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURE RUNWAY**

A mysterious looking shadow covered in all black is about to board a private jet. Several guards are surrounding the figure as it goes through security and walks in between the cracked pavement leading up to the steps of the aircraft. It hears someone call its name and turns its head with nothing revealed, not even its eyes.

“Where are you going?” A man asked the shadowy figure.
“I have unfinished business to take care of.”
“I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

“No one asked for your opinion.”

“I’m serious. You are making a big mistake.”
“I don’t care what you or anyone else thinks.”

The figure takes its last step before boarding the plane. The guard follows and once again tries to convince it to stay in town.

“You are going to regret this.”
“We both know that isn’t true.”

“Why can’t you just let him be? He deserves to be happy.”
“That’s exactly what I’m doing.”
“What has he ever done to you?”
“Why don’t you shut the hell up and mind your own damn business. Get off my jet!”

“Fine, but don’t say you weren’t warned!”
“Get lost, fool.”

The plane takes off and flies through the night sky with every star diminishing in color as it breaks through the dark clouds. There is definitely tension in the universe, one that is very unsettling and mysterious.

**\*\*\* DIANA’S POINT OF VIEW \*\*\***

“Ana, it’s getting late.” Jasmine said.

“Michael made us promise to get you to bed at a reasonable hour.”

“I can’t believe him. He is totally controlling your minds.”
“Yes, but in a good way.”

The girls took me upstairs and made sure I was comfortable.

“We all have a busy day tomorrow. It’s a good thing we brought our bags with us so we can go straight to the airport from here.”
“Michael wanted to send his town car to get us in the morning but I told him we have our own arrangements for when we travel.”
“He is always thinking one step ahead.”
“Indeed, Marie. He’s been that way since he was a child.”
“Who can blame him? It’s part of his brilliance.” Jasmine said.

“Girls, I don’t feel tired. I’m really stressed about this tour.”
“Don’t be.” They both said.

“We will both be there with you setting everything up and making sure it’s all perfect. Michael won’t have it any other way.”
“You’re right. I guess I’m just nervous for no reason.”
“Yes, you are now go to bed. Marie and I will sleep in the guest rooms.”
“He hasn’t called yet.”
“Ana, it’s a 12 hour flight. He just boarded this morning.”

“I know, but according to his itinerary and time difference, he should have landed by now.”

“I’m sure he has. He can’t exactly land and leave the airport with ease like the rest of us.”
“That’s true. I’m sure he’s just delayed.”
“Try to relax and get some sleep. We have a long flight ahead of us. We’ll keep our doors open. Just yell if you need one of us.”
“I will. Thanks you two. Goodnight.”
“We love you, Ana.”
“Love you too.”

They both hugged me and Jasmine turned off the light in my room. She left my door open and I could hear hers and Marie’s footsteps across the hall as they entered the guest rooms. My heart sank as I anxiously waited for Michael’s phone call. I didn’t know why but I couldn’t shake the feeling that something bad was about to happen. I felt a chill run down my spine as I turned to a more comfortable position. The cold sensation from my pillow made me think of Michael and how he must be feeling alone in a foreign country. I knew he had traveled several times in his life but I felt a bit of serenity knowing that he knew he would never be alone again. The thought of that made me feel better and I immediately drifted to sleep.

**\*\*\* THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT \*\*\***

I woke up suddenly in a cold sweat. My heart was pounding like someone was hitting me repeatedly with a hammer. I checked my phone to see if Michael called but he didn’t. I turned my head to look at his picture that rested on my night stand in a frame next to my bed and clutched it with my hands. I was afraid for his life. Something unusual was definitely permeating the air and it made me more frightened than ever. I looked at his rings on my fingers and kissed them both praying that wherever he was, he was safe without me.

I lay back on the bed still holding his picture with his thoughts dancing through my mind. I wished to hear his voice so badly and hated that I had no way of contacting him. Within minutes, my wish came true as I heard my phone ring and quickly answered it with the sounds of restlessness in my voice.

“Michael?”
“Yes, Diana. It’s me.”
“THANK GOD. Are you ok?”
“No.”
“I KNEW IT. WHAT’S WRONG?”
“I miss you so much.”
“Please don’t scare me like that.”
“What’s wrong?”
“I was so worried about you. I couldn’t even sleep.”
“I’m sorry. I just got to my hotel. The airport was a nightmare.”
“I can imagine. Are you feeling alright?”
“You tell me first.”
“I’m fine.”
“And the girls?”
“They are fine too. Both are asleep across the hall from me.”
“I told them to stay with you.”
“I know. They told me after we watched you board your plane as per your instructions.”

He giggled adorably like he always did.

“I’m glad they are good at following directions.”
“They have to be. They work for ME.”
“And me too now.”
“Indeed.”
“How is my little cupcake?”
“She’s fine. It felt like she was kicking me earlier.”
“Really?”
“Or it could have been space man trying to explore the universe around him.”
“That’s my boy.”
“SPEAKING OF WHICH – I CANNOT BELIEVE WHAT YOU SAID ON TV!”

Michael laughed making me smile brightly. I was so happy to hear the cheerfulness in his beautiful voice.

“I’m sorry. I just wanted you to know that I was thinking of you.”
“You are definitely something else, Mr. Jackson.”
“I love you.”
“I love you too.”
“Will you marry me?”
“Ye-“

I paused. For the first time, I actually hesitated to answer him.

“Diana? Diana?”

The phone fell from my hand and slid under my pillow. As I looked for it, I could hear the terror embedded in Michael’s voice as he kept yelling my name. I lifted my pillows and grabbed the phone telling him I was ok and still there with him.

“I’m sorry, baby. The phone fell from my hand.”
“You seem so distracted.”
“I’m not, I’m fine.”
“Diana, you are being dishonest with me.”
“I hate that you know me so well.”
“What’s wrong?”
“Michael, you just arrived in Bremen. I know you are jet legged. You should rest.”
“I rested on the plane. What is bothering you?”
“Michael…”

Just then, a vision suddenly came before my eyes. Michael was close to me but suddenly drifted away. When I came to, I could hear him calling me again.

“DIANA, WHAT IS WRONG?”
“Nothing, Michael. I’m ok.”
“Stop lying to me, girl.”
“Michael, I AM FINE.”
“Why won’t you tell me?”
“Because I can’t.”
“Why can’t you?”
“Why are you interrogating me?”
“Because this isn’t like you.”
“Well, maybe I’ve changed!”
“I can hear that.”
“Leave me alone!”
“Diana, this is ME you’re talking to.”
“I know who you are.”
“Why are you suddenly being so cold to me?”
“I should be asking you that question.”
“ME? What did I say?”
“You are accusing me of lying and pushing me to tell you what’s bothering me when nothing is.”
“If that were true, you wouldn’t be talking to me like this.”
“Michael, I have not changed.”
“You have and I can’t figure out why.”
“That makes two of us.”
“I can’t believe this is happening. We are arguing about nothing.”
“I’m not arguing with you. There is nothing wrong with me. I am fine.”
“You are not the same girl I was with last night.”
“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”
“You are not the girl I fell in love with.”
“WHAT?”
“You are not the girl that looked me in the eye and told me she’d marry me.”
“I DON’T WANT TO NOW!”

“So that’s why you didn’t sign the marriage certificate.”

I gasped so loud that he heard me.

“How did you know that?”
“Because if you had, I would have received it by now. I knew you wouldn’t do it.”
“WHAT?”
“Why do you think I sent it to you? I wanted to see if you were serious about it.”
“Michael, that’s not fair. You set me up.”
“My heart is no one’s toy, Diana.”
“I wasn’t trying to play with your feelings.”
“But you did.”
“What are you saying?”
“I want all of you or none of you.”
“Are you telling me if I don’t marry you, you won’t stay with me?”
“That’s exactly what I’m saying.”
“Michael! You would really leave me?”
“The answer to that is in your hands, Diana. Not mine.”

Tears were pouring down my face.

“Michael, you could never leave me.”
“You don’t know me.”
“You’re right – I don’t.”
“I gave you all of me and proved to you that I wanted to be with you.”

“I know that.”

“But you keep stalling when it comes to making things official.”
“I just don’t know if I have it in me in to be your wife.”
“You have something else in you that should help you answer that.”

I knew exactly what he was referring to. I touched my stomach gently wondering if our unborn child could help me find the answers I was desperately looking for.

“You have no idea how badly I want to be with you.”
“I don’t believe you.”
“Just because I won’t marry you?”
“That and one other thing.”
“Which is?”
“Your voice.”
“What about it?”
“You don’t sound the same. ”
“Michael, you’re being ridiculous.”
“You see? That’s what I mean.”
“What?”
“The Diana I know and love would have laughed at that. But you became defensive.”
“Is this really happening?”
“I don’t know, is it?”

I became frustrated at his comments. It seemed like we both became uninterested in each other and wanted to suddenly break free from our relationship.

“I can’t believe we are having this conversation.”
“Make up your mind, Diana. Do you want to be with me or not?”
“Why are you being so forceful?”
“Why are you being so indecisive?”

“Michael, I love you.”
“Do you?”
“How can you question me about it?”

“See? You’re doing it again.”

“I’m just concerned.”
“About?”
“Being your wife. Michael, it’s a big step for me.”
“So is getting pregnant, Diana. But you took that risk.”
“I know I did. But something about being your wife just makes me feel so incredibly uneasy.”
“Diana, I would leave my entire world for you.”
“You would not.”
“Like I said, you don’t know me.”
“Michael, you would never leave your career for a woman.”
“You are not just any woman. You are the love of my life. If you asked me to stop being an entertainer right now, I wouldn’t hesitate to come back to LA.”
“Are you serious?”
“You want me to show you?”
“NO! I believe you.”
“I’d never force you to do anything. I just want you to know that you mean the world to me and there’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you.”

“I know, baby.”
“I’m sorry if I was rude to you.”
“I’m sorry too. I owe you so much more than an apology.”
“Diana?”
“Yes?”
“Will you marry me?”
“Can you wait just a little longer?”
“As long as you want me to.”
“REALLY?”

“Of course. I told you there’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you.”
“I just need more time, Michael.”
“I understand. We’ll talk about it again after the tour ends.”
“That sounds perfect.”
“I love you, girl.”
“I love you too, baby.”
“I’m sending you a hug.”
“I’m sending you one right back with a kiss.”
“And one for cupcake too.”
“Hey! What about space man?”
“He doesn’t want me to kiss him. He likes it when you do it.”
“Michael, you are silly.”
“I’ll see you in two days?”
“You sure will.”
“I can’t wait to hold you in my arms again.”
“Me too. I miss everything about you.”
“Like?”
“The feel of your skin, the sway of your back when you walk, the way your smile lights up your face, the way your curls blanket your beautiful eyes, the way you breathe, the way your voice changes when you see me in person, the way your heart beats when I rest my head against your body.”

“That’s so sweet.”
“Just like you.”
“I love you.”
“I love you too.”
“Marry me?”
“I will. When the time is right.”
“Promise?”
“Yes, Michael I promise. You are the only one for me. I just need a little more time.”
“That’s all I needed to hear.”
“I’ll be counting the hours until I see you again.”
“Me too. I have to rehearse now.”
“Don’t over work yourself.”
“I won’t. Please get some rest.”
“I will. Goodnight baby.”
Goodnight, my wife.”

Hearing him call me that as I hung up made me shiver. This was the first time our conversation had been so deep. I still couldn’t figure out why I was stalling and just didn’t sign the marriage certificate. My heart was telling me to do it but my brain was asking me to wait. I looked at the clock and it was 4am. I thought long and hard about what I was going to do. When I finally made my decision, I fell asleep waiting anxiously for the sun to rise.

**\*\*\* THE NEXT MORNING \*\*\***

“Ana, wake up! We have to get ready! Our flight leaves in two hours!” Marie said as she shook me awake.

“What time is it?”
“8 o clock! Hurry up and get dressed. Jasmine made breakfast. Come and meet us downstairs.”
“I’ll be right down.”

She headed downstairs and I got up from my bed and started to get dressed. I slowly opened my drawer and took the marriage certificate out and looked at it again. I studied Michael’s signature and ran my finger across his name. I felt the incredible amount of confidence he must’ve had when he signed the document. I wished for the same confidence and hoped that I wouldn’t regret the choice I was about to make…