CHAPTER EIGHT:

*Not Close Enough*

“Wait here please.” The guard said as I stood outside Michael’s hotel door. “I’ll go in and see if he’s ready.” As I stood in the hallway, I couldn’t take my eyes off the beautiful view from the windows. Suddenly, I heard the elevator doors open and saw Marie coming out with another guard. “Thanks for leaving without me!” “I’m sorry, Marie. I forgot to tell you I was going to drive here myself.” “It’s ok. I’m just glad I made it. This place is gorgeous!” “Indeed.” “Is he inside?” “Wait here, please.” The other guard said as he too went to check on Michael.

“Marie, please don’t embarrass me by screaming when you see him.”

“I’ll try not to but whatever happens is beyond my control. What’s with the homeless look?”

“Michael asked me to wear something old. I have NO idea why.”

“He probably wants to rip them off you.”

“It’s not going to happen.”

“Right. By the way Jasmine is on her way here too.”

“Did you ask him if that was ok first?”

“Of course. He called again after you left work and told both of us to come see him since he’s leaving here tomorrow.”

“Good. I don’t want him getting in trouble or thinking I invited you both without his permission.”

The guards came out of the suite and said Michael was ready to see us. “We’ll be downstairs. His other guards are across the hall just in case something happens or if any of you need anything.” We thanked them as they went down the elevator. Marie started to have a panic attack. “Let’s go.” “I can’t do this Ana, I’m nervous.” “Will you COME ON?! It’s not the first time you’re meeting him.” “I know, but it is in five years.” “I said the same thing when I saw him again. Don’t worry, he’ll be so thrilled to see you.” “Ana, I don’t know why but I’m so shaky.” “Marie, it’s rude to keep him waiting. I’ll be right there with you.” “You go first.” “What?” “Go see him first and then I’ll come in afterwards.”

“Marie, you’re being silly. Let’s both go together.” “Please, Ana? Just go first.” “FINE. Wait here.” I went inside and sat on the couch in the living room. I called for him but he didn’t respond. A few minutes later, he came from behind me and kissed my cheek.

“Guess who?”  
“Gee, I wonder.”

He kissed my forehead then came over and sat next to me. I stood up and gave him a hug.

“I missed you, my sweet girl.”  
“I missed you too, baby.”

I kissed his precious lips then told him Marie was outside.

“Why is she waiting out in the hall?”  
“She’s really nervous.”  
“About what?”  
“I really don’t know. I tried talking her out of it but it didn’t work. Is it ok to bring her in?”  
“Of course. I asked both girls to come visit me today.”

“Jas is on her way. I’ll get Marie now.”

As I turned my back, he grabbed my arm and pushed me down on the couch.

“When they leave, I have a few surprises for you.”

“I’m looking forward to them.”

“I’m hoping you will reward me after.”

“I don’t think so.”

“Please don’t make me wait, Diana.”

“You don’t have a choice.”

He tried sweet talking me again and used his charm to try and weaken me.

“You know you can’t resist me.”

“I did before.”  
“That’s because I let you leave.”

“You didn’t LET me leave. I HAD to leave so I did.”

He grabbed my hand. I knew exactly where he was going to put it.

“Diana, something is calling you…”  
“Michael, NO.”

“Please?”  
“Marie is outside.”  
“She can’t come in. The door is locked.”  
“Then how did I get in just now?”  
“It’s a security feature. There’s a switch on the wall that can lock the door.”

“You mean you can actually lock people out?”

“If I want to, yes.”  
“That’s good to know.”

He let go of my hand and started running his fingers up and down my body. As amazing as it felt, I had to show him that it didn’t have any effect on me.

“You have NO idea how much I’ve been craving your body, Diana. I don’t know how much longer I can wait to have you.”

“We can’t. She is outside. We’ll talk about that later.”

He immediately sensed something was wrong.

“Why does it seem like you don’t feel the same way anymore?”  
“Believe me, it’s not that.”  
“Are you sure?”  
“Would I be here if that was the case?”

“Then why do you keep saying no?”

“I’m not saying no, Michael. I’m just saying not right now.”

I could tell he seemed worried as if my interest in him had somehow disappeared. I didn’t want him to feel that way so I kissed him passionately and grabbed his waist tightly.

“Michael, I love you.”  
“I love you too, Liberian girl.”  
“Trust me. We’ll talk about it later, ok?”  
“Sure.”

“Please don’t be sad.”  
“I’m not.”

I kissed him over and over again until he laughed and convinced me he was happy again. I then ran to the door and called Marie inside. She was still nervous.

“Do I look ok?”  
“You look perfectly fine. Let’s go.”

“Does he know I’m here?”  
“Yes, I told him.”

He wasn’t sitting on the couch so I asked Marie to wait in the hall as I went in one of the bedrooms to check on him.

“Michael? Marie is here.”

“I’ll be right there.”

We sat on the couch and Michael came out of the bedroom in different clothing a few minutes later. Marie quickly covered her eyes and stood up feeling incredibly excited yet jittery.

“I can hear him walking.”  
“He’s in front of you, Marie. Open your eyes.”

“NO!”  
“Marie, he’s right there!”

“I know he is!”

Michael giggled as he stood there waiting for her to see him. He slowly removed her hands from her face and affectionately wrapped his arms around her. Of course, she screamed in his ears but he handled it like the pro he was. I couldn’t help but cry as I saw him being so loving towards her. The way Michael adored his fans made me appreciate him so much more. I felt grateful to know him but also felt sad about the fact that he was so going through so much himself but never allowed anyone to see or know it.

“It’s ok. You can stop shaking. It’s just me, Marie.”  
“I’ve missed you SO much.”

“I know. I missed you more.”

“I can’t even look at you.”  
“Won’t you at least sit with me?”

“Yes, but I feel so shy.”  
“It’s ok. You know I am too.”  
“I can help you with that.”  
“We’ll help each other, ok?”

He made her laugh and she finally let go of him and opened her eyes. Luckily, she didn’t scream but cried tears of joy as she hugged him again.

“You look just like you do on TV.”  
“You don’t think I’ve changed?”  
“Not really. You’ve always been beautiful to me.”

“Are you always this sweet?”  
“When it comes to you.”

He kissed her forehead and they both sat on the couch talking and laughing.

“I’m going out on the patio to get some air. Let me know when Jasmine gets here.” I went outside and sat on a chair watching the beautiful blue lake sparkle in the moonlight. Michael came to me a few minutes later and wrapped a blanket around me.

“Are you ok?”  
“Yeah, why?”  
“Why won’t you sit with us?”  
“I want you both to have your moment alone together.”

“You really don’t mind?”  
“Not at all. Go be with her and thank you for covering me.”

He gently put his hand on my face and pressed his lips to mine.

“You are so lovely.”

“Not as much as you are.”

“Will you marry me?”  
“I’ll have to think about it.”

I heard him gasp as if he were about to have a panic attack.

“I’M KIDDING! Don’t freak out.”  
“Don’t ever joke about that again, please.”  
“Michael, relax. I was only teasing you.”   
“So you’ll do it?”  
“I’m still wearing your ring, aren’t I?”

“You know I can’t lose you.”  
“You won’t. Please stop worrying so much. You will make yourself sick again.”

Just then, the doorbell rang. “Jasmine’s here!” Marie yelled. Michael told her to press the button on the wall before opening the door.

“Come sit with us, please?”  
“I will now that Jas is here.”

“You seem so different.”  
“How?”  
“You’re not yourself around me.”  
“Michael, I’m FINE.”

“I can feel that something is bothering you.”  
“I’m ok, really. I’m just stressed about work.”

“Tell me later?”  
“Of course.”

I kissed his cheek then we both went inside. Michael gave Jasmine a hug then we all sat down and had different conversations. “Now that you’re all here, I want to make sure we are on the same page about the tour.” Michael said.

“OH MY GOD! I AM SO EXCITED!” Marie yelled.

“I have to go shopping and get so many new dresses and shoes. Jas, you have to go with me!”

“Of course, I have to get a million things too!”

“GIRLS! Will you let the man finish?!”

“Sorry, go ahead.”

“It’s ok. I have to make sure everyone knows what they are doing and how much time they have to get it done. I’ve made up a schedule sheet for everyone so no one will be confused or feel pressed for time.”

Once the tour details were discussed and finalized, Michael said he had a surprise for the girls. “I promised this one…” He said pointing to Marie. “I’d show her how to dance.” “OH MY GOD! I HAVE TO RECORD THIS!” Jasmine said. “Can I go home and get my camera?” “I have one right there.” Michael said pointing to the entertainment center. “It will record it for you.” “You are AMAZING!” Marie said as she hugged him again.

“Follow me to the other room.” We all got up and walked across a long corridor. There was a large, empty room with a hardwood floor across the other end of the suite. Michael asked me to bring the video camera with me.

“Is this a dance room?” Marie asked as we entered.  
“No, it’s a dining room. I had the furniture moved for now.”

“WOW. This is HUGE.” Jasmine said.

“I’m going to sit and control the camera.”  
“Ana, you won’t join us?”

“No way. I can’t dance like him.”

“NO ONE CAN. But we can try.”

“I’d rather watch and learn from the video afterwards when no one is watching.”

I placed the camera on a nearby shelf and turned it on. Michael came up from behind me and whispered in my ear “I’ll give you private lessons.” He then gently tapped my behind. “MICHAEL!” He laughed then kissed my shoulder and went back to the girls.

As I watched him teach them how to dance, I couldn’t help but stare at his feet. He was so swift that none of us could keep up with him visually. Michael was so kind. He showed us his famous dance steps and his entire Dangerous song routine. I smiled as I watched how happy he was while doing what he loved. I prayed that he would always stay that way. A few minutes later, the phone in the hotel rang.

“That’s probably, Chris.” Michael said. “Diana, can you get it for me?” “Am I allowed?” “Yes, of course.” I went across the room to answer it. To my surprise, it was a woman.

“Where is Michael?”  
“I’ll get him for you.”

“Who are you?”  
“My name is D—“

Marie turned up the music so loud I couldn’t hear a thing. She and Jasmine were having way too much fun dancing to Michael’s songs.

“WILL YOU PLEASE TURN THAT DOWN?! I can’t hear the person on the phone! Michael, it’s for you.”

“Is it Chris?”  
“No, it’s a lady.”

He quickly turned his head and looked at me with the most furious look in his eyes.

“HANG UP!”

“Why?”  
“NOW!”

“But, Michael—“

He ran over to me and slammed the phone down.

“MICHAEL! That was SO mean!”  
“She deserves it. Don’t answer if it rings again.”  
“But WHY?”  
“Just DON’T!!”

“Ok, I’m sorry.”

The girls looked confused as they heard him snap at me. Feeling embarrassed, he hugged me and apologized for getting angry.

“I’m sorry if I scared you. I didn’t mean to do that.”

“What’s wrong? Who is she?”  
“I’ll tell you later when these two are gone, ok?”  
“You’re not in danger are you?”  
“No, of course not. I’ll tell you after the girls leave.”

I shook my head agreeing with him as he went back to teach the girls some more dance steps. I knew my instincts were right. Something was definitely going on and I had to find out what it was. But for now, I knew I had to act like everything was ok since I didn’t want to the girls to suspect anything. I tried my hardest to keep a straight face but that phone call really bothered me.

**\*\*\* TWO HOURS LATER \*\*\***

After the fun was over, one of Michael’s guards came to his room and told him the girls had to leave because his fan visiting hours were over.

“We’ll see each other again in May before we leave one more time.” He said as he walked the girls to the door. He gave them the video cassette from the camera which made Marie feel like she was in heaven.

“I know the perfect place to keep this. No one will ever touch it.”  
“The left side of her bed.” Jasmine said.

“JAS!”

“Hey, don’t say that about my favorite fan. She’ll be mine in the next life.”

“REALLY?”

“EXCUSE ME?”

“Oops.”

“Does the word TATTOO sound familiar?”

Michael smiled and laughed like a cute little boy.

“I’m sorry, that slipped my mind.”

“She can’t have you EVER. You belong to ME.”

“Well, if they ever clone me, you can have that one.”

“It won’t be the same.”

“I know but it’ll be the next best thing.”

The girls thanked him as they said goodbye and left. Once they were gone, the feeling of distrust suddenly came back to me. I sat on the couch feeling worried that I may have gotten myself into another ordeal similar to the one I was in five years ago. Michael sat down next to me and held my hand.

“Are you ok?”

“Michael, who was she?”

“I hate talking about her.”  
“Who?”  
“I wish she’d just leave me alone. She just doesn’t get it.”  
“Who are you talking about?”  
“Who else?”

“WHO?”

“I can’t even say her name.”  
“Don’t tell me it’s who I think it is.”

“My ex-wife.”

Hearing those words come out of his mouth made my stomach turn in the worst way. As much as it bothered me that he was divorced, I knew I had no one to blame but myself and had to come to terms with it.

“What does she want?”  
“Me.”  
“Meaning?”  
“She wants to get back together.”  
“And you?”  
“I don’t want her anywhere near me.”

“Are you sure?”  
“Do you really think you’d be here if I still wanted her?”

“Michael, I’ve been down this road with you before.”  
“What do you mean?”  
“This bad habit you have playing games with people.”  
“I could never do that to you.”  
“That’s not what I mean. You have to figure out what you want.”  
“I want YOU, Diana.”  
“That’s what you say.”

“That’s what I KNOW. Do you doubt me?”

“Michael, there’s a big difference between doubt and uncertainty.”

“Is that why you’ve been resisting me?”  
“That’s one reason.”

“You don’t see me as the man you were with before?”

“No, I don’t and I never can again. You were married and slept with another woman after me.”

“Are you afraid to be with me now because of that?”  
“Michael, that’s not what I mean.”

He pulled me closer to him and lay against me. I put my hand on his head as he continued telling me what was on his mind.

“I love you, girl. You’re the only one for me.”

“Why is she still after you?”

“Because she thinks we can recapture what’s gone.”

“What do you think?”  
“What I KNOW is I’m done with her and I told her that.”

“You have?”  
“Hundreds of times. She even followed me on tour.”  
“REALLY?”  
“She came to the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, and Tokyo. I had to get twice as many security guards just to keep her away from me.”

“I don’t blame her. It is hard to let go once a relationship with you comes to an end.”

“It was just as bad for me when we separated, Diana.”

“I know. I didn’t mean to sound selfish.”

Michael poured his heart out to me about his marriage, his trial, why he did the things he did and what happened to him because of them. As guilty as I felt, he said he forgave me and that I could really save him from his troubles.

“I’m going to help you get through this.”

“You will?”  
“I promise. You will never have to face the world alone again.”

“Please stay here with me tonight?”  
“Sure. I brought my things with me because I knew you’d ask.”

Hearing me say yes made him so happy. He jumped up and kissed my face all over.

“Someone is super happy.”  
“You have NO idea.”

“By the way, why did you make me wear old clothes?”  
“Oh god, I almost forgot. Wait here for me.”

“You’re going to change AGAIN?”

“I have to for this.”

After a few minutes, Michael came out of the bedroom in very simple clothing.

“Come with me!”

He took my hand and dragged me across the hall into another section of the suite.

“Gosh, this place is just like the hotel we were in back in New York.”

“I know. That’s why I chose this one.”

We continued walking until we reached another empty room. The walls were completely white and there wasn’t a single piece of furniture anywhere.

“What is this?”  
“A canvas room.”  
“What’s that?”

Michael explained to me that a canvas room was a special place designed to draw and paint.

“You mean we can actually paint and write all over these walls?”  
“Yes, as long as you use this paint.”

He showed me a palette full of several different beautiful colors.

“It’s water based so it comes right off.”

“That is the COOLEST THING EVER.”

“I want you to draw and paint with me.”  
“Michael, I’m not as gifted as you are when it comes to being artistic.”   
“It’s just for fun. Please?”

“Is this why I had to wear old clothes?”  
“Of course. I didn’t want you ruining your beautiful things.”

“You’re sweet. I’d love to draw with you.”

He kissed me then handed me a paint brush, some pastels and my own palette of colors. We both had our own blank canvases on the wall and Michael stood behind me.

“We’ll both make something and show each other, ok?”  
“Sure. But don’t laugh at me because I’m not good at this stuff. “

After a while, we both finished creating our masterpieces. I was hesitant to show my creation to someone with as much as talent as him but also knew I couldn’t get away with not showing him. I asked Michael to show me his first. When he did, I immediately burst into tears as I gazed upon the most beautiful piece of art I had ever seen in my entire life:



“I can’t believe you drew that.”  
“Do you like it?”  
“It’s gorgeous.”  
“It’s yours.”  
“Really? I can have it?”  
“Of course. I made it for you, girl.”

I couldn’t stop myself from running and grabbing on to him. He said he could feel my energy as he put his arms around me and held me without saying a word. At that moment, being with him felt like the right thing to do. It amazed me how seeing something as simple as a drawing made my heart melt all over again. I wasn’t sure if my decision was right or not but what I did know was that nothing else mattered. I wanted him and felt he had a right to know.

“I love you so much, baby.”  
“I love you more, Diana.”

“Will you make me another one?”  
“A picture?”  
“Yes, please.”  
“Sure. You want it now?”

I smiled cleverly as I knew that was the PERFECT time for what I had in mind.

“Yes, Michael. I DO want it now.”

I pushed him gently against the wall next to his drawing and started removing his clothes. He was so shocked he wasn’t able to fathom what was happening. I reached for his belt and started unfastening it. He then came to and finally clued in.

“GIRL, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?”

“You know you want it.”

“Wait, Diana. WAIT! ”

“WHAT IS IT?”

He couldn’t stop himself from laughing as he put his hands on top of mine to prevent me from undressing him any further. I was so overwhelmed by his picture that I wanted to show him how much he meant to me physically.

“You really want to do this now?”  
“YES!”

“You’re sure?”  
“Yes, Michael. I really do.”

“You won’t say no again?”

I quickly grabbed my own shirt and took it off, throwing it onto the floor.

“Do I look like I will say no to you?”

Feeling instantly aroused, Michael grabbed me and started kissing my entire body. He sat me down on the floor and removed the rest of my clothes as well as his own. I winked at him and crossed my legs purposely exposing my vulva. I put my arms out for him to hold me as he came down towards the floor. We both lay nude together on the floor not saying a word. Feeling his enticing body against mine brought back memories again. A single tear fell from my eye and landed on his cheek. I wiped it gently as he grabbed my hand.

“I know what you’re thinking.”  
“Do you?”  
“Yes.”  
“How?”  
“I was thinking the same thing.”

“Do you remember our first time?”  
“Of course. I think about it every day.”

“Me too. Remember you sang to me?”

“Yes, Diana. I do.”

“I still have that gown.”  
“I still have your bra.”

I laughed.

“I completely forgot about that!”   
“I didn’t.”  
“I hope no one ever finds it.”  
“Lisa did once.”  
“REALLY?”

“No, I’m kidding. It’s in a safe place.”

“I love being with you like this.”  
“Me too.”

After cuddling him for so long, my body was telling me it was time to move to the next level. I started exploring his body and gently rubbed his back. I noticed Michael didn’t flinch at all when he was touched in certain areas. I then rubbed his head gently to see if he would react and he didn’t.

“You don’t cringe when I touch you, baby.”  
“I’m not afraid anymore.”

“I’m so glad that you feel comfortable now.”

“I always did. I just wasn’t used to someone touching me.”  
“Michael, if I ever say or do anything to make you feel that way again, please tell me?”  
“I will and I hope you do the same.”

He came up to my face and kissed my lips while his hands were starting to move around my body. As we continued, he quickly stopped what he was doing and slightly pushed himself away from me.

“We can’t do this.”  
“Why? What’s wrong?”  
“We just can’t.”  
“Why not?”

“I don’t want that one part of history repeating itself, Diana.”

“Michael, what are you talking about?”

Without saying a word, he put his hand on my stomach. I suddenly realized he was afraid I’d get pregnant again.

“Michael, that was a long time ago.”  
“I know but I still don’t think we should.”

I was too far gone to even care at that point. I pulled him on top of me and asked him to continue.

“It’s ok. It won’t happen again.”

“How do you know?”  
“I just do. Even if it does, it’s ok with me.”  
“Are you sure?”  
“Will you marry me?”

Michael did the cutest thing I had ever seen. He smiled to himself then covered his face with his own hands and giggled.

“Oh my god! You are SO adorable.”

“Thank you.”

“I love you!”

“I love you too. There’s something I want to tell you…”

“What is it, baby?”

He paused for a moment then looked down as if he were shy.

“It’s ok. You can tell me.”

“Diana…”  
“Yes?”

“I have protection.”  
“DO YOU REALLY?”

“Yes. I was so hesitant to tell you.”  
“Why?”  
“I was afraid you would think that was all I wanted from you.”

“Isn’t it, though?”  
“Yes, but it’s not the ONLY thing.”

We both started to laugh as I kissed him and got up from the floor.

“Where is it? I’ll get it.”  
“In the other room in my bag on the floor. Open the front pocket inside.”

I grabbed one of the white sheets Michael had on the floor and wrapped it around myself.

“I’ll be right back.”

“Ok, I’ll be here. Please hurry.”

I quickly made my way to the bedroom where Michael’s bag was. When I opened the inside pocket, a piece of paper fell out and landed directly in front of me. As my eyes briefly scrolled the page, the name at the bottom aggravated me.

