

That One Night

Bonus chapter

Grace

The house didn't look like much from the street. Just wood and glass and quiet earth-toned siding nestled into the rise of a Maine hillside, where spring had begun to thaw the last of winter's grip.

With our family growing, Quinton didn't want to live in the lodge anymore. Emma deserved a real home, and a busy hotel was no place to have a newborn. We still had around four months until I was due, which didn't leave much time to decorate and settle in, but Quinton was acting as if our lives depended on finding the perfect home.

Quinton's fingers tightened around mine the second we stepped onto the flagstone path.

“You okay?” I asked, brushing my thumb over his knuckles.

He nodded, jaw working. “Yeah. Just... I’ve looked at fifty places and hated all of them. I want this to be the one.”

“Fifty?” I teased. “Is that a real number or a Quinton number?”

He cracked a grin. “You’re sassy for someone waddling around like a duck.”

“I’m carrying your kid. And I’m not waddling. Yet.”

Quinton leaned in and pressed a lingering kiss to my lips.

Emma, a few steps ahead, twirled on the path. “Do you think there’s a garden? I want a spot for strawberries.”

“I bet we can grow strawberries,” I said, rubbing my stomach. “And maybe a little wild mint.”

Pregnancy cravings were very real, and this baby wanted mint everything. Mint choc-chip ice cream, peppermint patties, mint sauce on meat, mint tea...just last night I’d

discovered the joys of mint vinaigrette on raspberries and broccoli with roasted cashew nuts. Quinton looked at me like I was insane. Izzy, the pastry chef at the lodge, thought I was a genius.

The front door opened before we could knock, and the man standing there didn't look like he belonged in real estate. Or spring, honestly.

Dark brown hair, neatly slicked back into a styled fade, not a strand out of place. A three-piece suit. Crisp button-down, immaculate charcoal blazer, vest on like it was armor. Bright blue eyes—cool and direct—beneath thick brows and a sharp, unreadable expression. There was something sculpted and deliberate about him, from the angle of his cheekbones down to his shined boots. Even his five o'clock shadow looked like it had been precision-trimmed.

He didn't smile.

"You're late," he said.

Quinton groaned. “We’re seven minutes early.”

“I said three sharp.”

“And you’re not even a realtor,” Quinton shot back, grinning as he walked forward for a quick, firm handshake.

“Exactly. Which means I don’t have time for house-hunting tantrums. I build multimillion-dollar developments, not daydream decks and Pinterest kitchens.”

“You’re a saint, Dante.”

Dante Callahan was a friend of Quinton’s. They’d met through work, and Dante had been involved in the construction of several Sullivan properties throughout the East Coast.

He didn’t respond. Just stepped aside so we could enter.

“He owes me,” Quinton told me under his breath as we passed through the threshold. “I hooked him several new clients after he completed the Sullivan projects.”

“And this is repayment? Being your realtor?”

“If you knew Dante, you’d know this is above and beyond,” Quinton snickered.

“Sounds like a poor use of his time and skills,” I commented, but then Quinton had barely been sleeping he was so obsessed with finding us a place to call home before the baby came. The perfect family home. All I cared about was that we already had the perfect family.

Dante’s voice echoed from ahead. “Your wife talks more sense than you do. And my assistant found this, so if you hate the place, blame Josie.”

The way he said Josie—flat on the surface, but there was weight behind it. The kind of weight that comes from a name you say too often in your head but try to keep light when it crosses your lips.

Josie. Assistant. Sure.

I glanced at Dante. He was already moving on, showing Emma the sunken living

room like he hadn't just dropped a hint of something unspoken and unresolved.

I knew that armor. I'd seen it on Quinton, once.

The house opened up in quiet layers—sunlight pouring in through floor-to-ceiling windows, wide oak floors warm underfoot, air that smelled like nature and peace and something good waiting to happen. The view out back was all green and sky.

Quinton pulled me close as Emma danced from room to room, narrating her future. “There’s room here. For us. For more.”

I pressed a hand to my stomach. Five months along, and every day felt more real. Like this life we were building had roots now.

“You think this is the one?” I asked.

Quinton nodded, voice low. “Yeah. I do. And I trust Dante. For some reason.”

“I heard that,” Dante called from the kitchen, where he stood beside a sleek stone island, glancing over specs on his phone.

“Still not a realtor,” he added dryly.

I leaned close to Quinton. “Is he always like this?”

Quinton smirked. “He has layers. Mostly granite and rebar, but still.”

The tour wound down with Emma discovering a nook under the stairs she declared “perfect for reading and secret snack storage.” The house felt...not perfect. Not staged or glossy. But ready. Like it was waiting for noise and life and soft things.

By the door, Dante gave Quinton a nod. “It’s off-market. If you want it, I can make it happen by the end of the month.”

“That fast?” I asked.

Dante glanced at me. “When I’m involved, I get things done.”

“Tell Josie thanks for her help,” I said, casually.

His gaze softened for just a second before the shield slammed back into place.

His eyes flicked to mine. “Yeah. Will do.”

Quinton clapped him on the back. “You really outdid yourself, man. We’ll take it.”

Dante gave the faintest twitch of a smile. “Good. Now you can stop talking about how I owe you a favor. If anything, you owe me for this. You know I don’t do anything...domestic.”

Something told me he was talking about more than just real estate, but I could tell he was pleased.

As we stepped into the spring sunshine, Quinton reached for my hand again.

“I want to put down roots with you, Grace,” he said softly. “Not just raise a baby. Build a life. A loud, messy, wonderful one.”

I smiled, full and sure. “We already are.”

Behind us, Dante stood in the doorway, phone already pressed to his ear.

“Josie. Got a minute?” There was a pause as he listened. “Yeah, they loved it. You did well.”

He didn’t smile. But he didn’t sound like he wanted to hang up, either.