

Danielle opened the door and it was William. All 6'2" of him, with his dark hair and his strong, powerful upper body staring at her. His masculine scent greeted her with a deep spicy musk that was a blend of his natural body scent and the activities of the day. It was poignant and comforting to her. It was him. No one else. Just the unique essence that she had captured in every olfactory, haptic, and iconic sensory memory she had about him. Permanent memories stored deep within the obscured parts of her body, never to be forgotten.

"Hi" she said softly.

"Hi" he responded.

"Please. Please come in. Sorry I just sorta froze there," she said as she tried to come up with a response to the hypnotized greeting she just experienced.

William walked in and removed his jacket and placed it over the back of a kitchen chair. His movements were slow and methodical as if he were unfamiliar with the dynamic between them and was attentive to every breath she inhaled and released.

"I need to make this right. It is my fault. I have to own this," she said silently to herself as she fought her normal instincts to portray an indestructible piece of machinery.

She walked up to him and reached for his hand.

"I want to tell you that I am sorry for how I was last night. You didn't deserve to be treated poorly and I let my childish behavior take over. I hope you can forgive me. I am sorry, William," she said quietly.

"Danielle, of course I forgive you. I want us to talk, ok?" he said as he led her into the living room.

Danielle's heart began to pound and she sensed a mild panic attack attempting to rupture inside her as if she were about to be abandoned by him. She felt her stomach start to churn and felt tingling in her fingers. Her mind raced through forty negative scenarios as she tried to consider what he wanted to talk to her about. She wanted to scream at him and beg him not to leave her and he hadn't even spoken. Her mind spiraled into dark anguish as she anticipated the most devastating blow of her life.

They sat down beside each other on the couch and William looked at her. The color had left her face and she had a look of dread in her eyes.

He sensed her intense fear and reached for her. He pulled her close to him and she buried her face in his chest as he held her tightly. Her arms reached around and clung to him in a desperate grip. She dug her nails into his shirt as if to latch on to him.

William held her as he allowed her to endure the harshness of her emotions, but to provide a safe anchor for her as she experienced them. He understood how she needed to have his stability and his unconditional love and he believed that it could help her overcome the fear that had consumed her for nearly 37 years.

Danielle looked up after about 5 minutes of being wrapped in his arms and feeling his loving embrace. He said nothing while she clung to him, but he communicated volumes with his abiding presence.

"Are you ok?" he asked.

"I don't know!" she said.

“Let me tell you that you are ok. You are beyond ok Danielle,” he reassured her.

“I am the psychologist, but how do you just naturally know what to do and say? It is mind-blowing,” she said in confusion.

“You haven’t shared a lot about your life, but I saw one difficult moment with your mother. You know...when you shared her text messages with me earlier this year. That treatment doesn’t just start when a person is in their 30’s. It is obvious that you grew up with that. I saw how her rejection devastated you even after decades of understanding that’s how she is. Rejection from a parent causes wounds so deep that...well...there are probably no words,” he shared.

Danielle looked down as if he read into her soul.

“I want us to talk about this because I am here for you and I want to know how to love and support you. I honestly don’t think our exchange last night was really bad. It wasn’t as awful as you are suggesting it was. I could tell you were short with me and guarded, but that’s fine,” he said as he tried to make sense of the intensity, he felt from her.

“Maybe it was just a torrential storm in my mind for the most part. The part that you didn’t and couldn’t see. I was shocked when I looked at my phone at the end of the day and you hadn’t texted me. I don’t know why, but my mind instantly tried to convince me that you were out with someone else or that you didn’t really care. Some bullshit like that. I am sorry,” she recalled.

“Do you wonder about me that way, Danielle?” he asked.

“No. Not at all. I have never felt insecure with you at all. You have never given me a reason to question you,” she said confidently as she quickly scanned her heart.

“Do you wonder if I will hurt you in any way?” he asked.

Danielle’s eyes filled with tears as he asked her that question. A question that pierced her heart so profoundly.

“William. No,” she whispered as she consciously became aware of and believed that for the first time in her life that someone, she was close to would not hurt her.

“I want to share something with you. We have been seeing each other for several months. I could have told you those words back in March, but they would have only sounded good to you. You would not have been able to believe them. Not deep inside your heart. I needed to demonstrate it to you so that you could be the one to say those things. Not me,” he said as he smiled at her.

“William, I believe that I could have been better. I believe that I have tried so very hard to rise above my situation and not repeat any of it, but I have done so by being an intellectual construct. I have overcome it by being a robot that is devoid of feeling. Feelings have no order to them. They have no security. I don’t understand them. They make me wild and I am not wild!” explained Danielle as she opened up to him.

“You aren’t wild. You have just been with people who seem to repeat what you have known. Rejection. Abuse. Selfishness. Those are the things that make anyone feel wild because they are harmful. If you feel wild because of those dynamics, then it is a blessing. We aren’t made to be rejected, abused, or

used Danielle. We naturally react against that form of treatment. When we react against it, we behave erratically and in self-preserving ways. Which isn't always pretty. I get it," he reassured.

"I am tired. I am tired of being a construct that can only function out of my mind. I want to be able to feel and to be safe in feeling, you know?" she asked as she allowed herself to acknowledge her own heart.

"I haven't talked to you much about Wes, the man that I was seeing. No. I wasn't just seeing him, I was entrenched in a deep, over-my-head, unhealthy relationship with him. I thought I was madly in love with him. He taught me a lot about myself that I was unable to really see. But in looking back, he used his "magic" to bring out this awareness but it was all for him really. He had a gift of seeing my potential and sharing it...things I could not see until he brought it to reality in me. I know that sounds strange, but it was a real gift that he possessed. But he used that gift to prop me up – pretty much for his benefit. He probably used that same charming skill with countless other women, all the while, I believed I was special," shared Danielle as she allowed the puzzle pieces to connect in her mind.

"I am sorry honey. You don't deserve to be used by anyone," comforted William.

"I never really saw myself as that person. One who would allow myself to get so deeply entangled in an emotional swamp. I didn't see it coming to be honest. I wasn't looking for it. I was living my life with Jack and simply allowing my pulse to move me forward to the next day. A perfect marriage for a robot. No feelings, no emotional threat. No connection. It was ideal for me in many ways. I wasn't happy by any stretch and thought I wanted more, but there was nothing there. I lived in a loveless marriage for years and thrived...professionally, I guess. Very strange," she said as she continued to process her life and the revelations that surfaced.

Danielle looked up and made eye contact with William. Her mascara-stained eyes provided a contrast to the bursting green and yellow hues that seemed to spring from her face. His handsome, rugged features naturally reached inside her and locked in to her desires. Yes, he was handsome by any woman's standards, but looks really have a shelf-life of about 25 seconds if one were to be honest. William possessed something far more attractive and striking than his looks. Something sustaining and authentic. Something intangible.

She felt the heat of her desire for him surge through her body igniting every sensory response inside her. She leaned into him and placed her hands on either side of his face, feeling the prickly stubble of his beard caress the palms of her hands.

William pulled her as close to him as he could. Tightly, firmly, and intensely.

He kissed her with flames of passion that were born from the depths of his heart and expressed through his powerful arms as he felt every curve and contour of her body press against his.

As they began to rediscover each other, a very heavy thought entered his mind.