

The Masterpiece

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Dedicated to:
*Her that is my Mona Lisa &
my Starry Night.*

Prologue

She was everything that he wanted and in the beginning she didn't realize it. Now she finds herself sitting before him in his studio preparing to be immortalized. Now there will be no questions or doubts where his once jaded heart now lies.

His canvas was bare and sat there empty upon his easel for years without any purpose but to sorely remind him of what he once loved and once broke his heart. His art was his passion and anyone who truly knew him knew that a pad and pencil were never too far from his talented hands. He would sketch at the drop of a dime and enjoyed the sheer bliss of it. Every line, curve and angle he cherished it all and more importantly he respected it. He respected the craft and the lineage from Van Gogh to Rembrandt, Disney to Chuck Jones, Da Vinci 's Mona Lisa was iconic in his embryonic stages

"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication".
-Leonardo Di Vinci-

Those words resonated with him from the first time he heard them and he strived to keep that principle visible in every piece he

did. Todayhis hands quivered as he laid down the soft graphite lines of a piece that no one in his inner circle knew or could foresee being his finest piece of art ever.

She sat there on the stool with her hair elegantly pinned up with a few strands softly draped across the back of her neck. Whether he knew or not she was just a nervous but for other reasons. It had been several years since she sat in front of a man covered in next to nothing. He grabbed the remote of the light table and turned up the volume filling the studio with Andrea Bocelli's "*Con Te Partiro*". The sound of the strings soothed her soul and calmed her nerves as she closed her eyes and lost herself in the moment reminiscing on how she got here and everything that led her here.

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She was self-conscious of her beauty and that was how he left her. Now she deeply breathes hoping not to be judged by him, hoping not to repeat history, repeat the shame and repeat the hurt.



Much like all little girls Kim believed in love at first sight and being swept off her feet by her Prince Charming and she thought she had that when she met Antonio Marcello.

Antonio was a suave dark haired Italian businessman who stole her heart from the minute they met. He was tall, handsome, witty, charming and intelligent he swept her right off of her feet just like she imagined all those years ago when she had Barbie in one hand and Ken in the other. The two of them were inseparable to the point that she gave up her career, cashed in her 401k and relocated to his home town to help him start up his architecture firm. Shortly thereafter they were married and her dreams had come true. She had her forever in him and life couldn't be any better. For two years, her life was a picture perfect scene right out of a traditional fairy tale and once again she was getting ready to show the world what "*Happily Ever After*" truly looked like.

He was out of town at a networking event and she wanted to surprise her husband who she had missed so she purchased a last minute ticket and caught a redeye flight and flew to Atlanta to be by his side. She called his phone to see where he was but

only got his voicemail instead so she headed straight to location where she knew the event was being held. When she walked in the hotel passing the hall she saw her husband on the dancefloor slow dancing with another woman. Thinking nothing of it she smiled for it wasn't the first time that he's danced with a future business associate he was again charming and this was just a part of his engaging personality. Her smile quickly disappeared when she was horrified by what she soon saw. His hand was sliding lower and lower down the center of her back as she started kissing on his neck and eventually kissing him directly on the lips. Her heart broke and in that moment she slowly walked towards them with tears welling up in her eyes. She tapped her husband on the shoulder as if she wanted to cut in on their dance when he turned around to be slapped across his face **"YOU BASTARD! HOW COULD YOU?"** she yelled at him.

With tears now streaming down her face she glared at the other woman with a stare of icy daggers before running out of the room. Shocked at his wife's sudden appearance in Atlanta Antonio ran out after her to explain his actions catching up with her in the parking lot.

"Kim wait!" he cried.

“Wait for what?” For me to see kissing another woman or worse?” she argued. “What the hell was that? Is this why you didn’t want me to come with you?”

“No it’s not like that!”

“Then what the hell is it then cause? From where I was standing you were kissing another woman! Who the hell is she? Better yet how long has this been going on?”

“Her name is Erica and it’s been going on for about a year and a half.” he confessed as her heart sank even lower just as it started to rain.

“What the fuck Toni! How could you?” she cried out in both heartache and anger.

“Look this was not how I wanted you to find out. I’ve been struggling with this for so long trying to find a way to tell you.”

“Tell me what that you’re a lousy two-timing son of a bitch?”

“No, that I’m leaving you.” he replied.

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“I’m in love with Erica and as soon as I can I’m going to file for divorce. You can have the house and everything in it. We’ve purchased a house downtown and it’s fully furnished so I really have no need for anything in there.” he coldly declared.

In the now pouring rain he took off his wedding ring and placed it in her hand “Thank you for allowing me to lay down the foundation of my company. Your hard work is appreciated but sadly no longer needed. I wish you all the best Kim.”

He walked away heading back into the hotel where the other young lady was standing outside by the door waiting for him to return to her. She stopped him before they went back inside and hugged him tightly whispering in his ear.

“Are you going to be ok?”

“Yeah, I’m doing fine right now between your arms. Let’s not let this ruin our evening. How about a bottle of champagne to celebrate?” he asked as they re-entered the hotel holding hands.

Kim standing there in the rain watched as they left from sight. With the raindrops masking her fallen tears she fell to her knees trying to figure out when did all of

this go so terribly wrong. Now sitting there on the chair with tears again streaming down her cheek in front of his blank canvas he lays down his initial lines. Noticing her crying he put down his pencil and approached her.

“Are you okay?” he asked as he handed her a piece of tissue to dry her eyes.

“I will be.”

Kim’s heartbreak was both extensive and intense for not only did he break her heart but her bank account and her spirit as well. Because of that she gave up on any possibility of true love. She wanted a husband and a family instead she was given divorce papers and a shattered heart. From that point love was an afterthought and took a backseat to her career that she resurrected. She soon thrived, rivaling the success of any other C.E.O or titan of industry. Her business acumen was evident in the forming of The Russo Foundation, a now successful Fortune 500 company. With offices on four continents her career was all that she needed. If anyone got too close to her heart she retreated.

In her mind a closed off heart was a protected heart and a protected heart was a

heart still in one piece and intact. Aside from her career Kim traveled the world both with her closest girlfriends and alone experiencing new cultures, exotic cuisines and remarkable locales. On that night in Atlanta Kim hit rock bottom and granted it took her some time for her to see the sunshine again for what it really was but when she did she embraced it. Every day was a new adventure and she reminded herself of that to the point that she had no need for love as long as she had her thriving career, her Black Card and her passport. William Shakespeare once wrote *“Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.”*

At one point as far as Kim was concerned:

“Love no one, trust even less and give no one a chance to get close enough to do you wrong!”

The two things that he ever dropped his guard for in life both hurt him and they were Love and Art and from that point forward neither would ever get that close enough to hurt him again. He was cold and stern but more importantly the two things left him jaded. As he began to sketch her sitting there all he could do was think of her and how he let his guard down the last time

