

RECALLING IT EVER

A Novel

True Love Lives to Stay

Written by:

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*"A mature romance that blurs the lines between
memory and desire, heartache and healing."*

Preface

Love is rarely simple. It twists and turns, breaks and mends, and teaches us more about ourselves than we often expect. *Recalling It Ever* is a story of passion, mistakes, forgiveness, and the relentless hope that true love can transcend time and trials. As you turn these pages, may you laugh, cry, and fall in love all over again — because sometimes, the heart remembers what the mind tries to forget.

Dedication

To all those who believe in the power of love's second chances — may you find your own flame rekindled in these pages.

I also dedicate this book to my dear friend who has been there for me and has encouraged me in writing,
“Tumwesigye Nathan Trigger”, May the Lord Keep
You forever with the heart and spirit

Acknowledgments

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Inspirational Quotes for Readers

- *“True love is not found, it is built — day by day, moment by moment.”*
- *“To love is to risk not being perfect, but to find perfection in imperfection.”*
- *“Every ending is just a new beginning waiting to be remembered.”*
- *“Love’s greatest power is its ability to heal even the deepest wounds.”*

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Chapter One: The Return to Kaken

The scent of rain still clung to the streets of **Kaken City**, though the skies had already cleared. Neon signs blinked lazily across rooftops, casting faint pink and amber glows on the wet pavement. The taxi window was down slightly, letting the breeze carry in that bittersweet cocktail of warm asphalt and distant flowers.

Desny sat quietly in the back seat, her head resting lightly against the window. Her fingers traced the condensation forming on the glass, drawing half-finished shapes she didn't care to complete. The city hadn't changed. But she had. It had been **seven years**.

Seven years since **Straiden University**, since the laughter in dorm corridors, the summer parties at **Nallia Beach**, and the midnight secrets whispered between locked dorm room doors. Seven years since she'd last seen **him** — **Klaven**. The name still moved through her mind like smoke she couldn't hold onto.

Now she was back.

Her return wasn't supposed to feel this way. It was just an art exhibit, a commissioned showcase. Professional. Timed. Contractual. But she knew — the moment she stepped into the city — this was more than just about art. She was here to face what she had buried. The taxi slowed in front of a small brick building, ivy creeping along its corners. **The Velvet Café**. Still standing.

Her heart skipped.

She hadn't meant to come here first. It was instinct. Memory had driven her. Back then, this café was their ritual — the group would gather every Sunday, sharing poetry, gossip, coffee, or late-night looks that meant more than friendship.

She pushed the door open.

A bell chimed above her head, soft and delicate. The warmth of the café wrapped around her like an old blanket. Familiar jazz filtered through the speakers, and the scent of cinnamon and mocha was exactly as she remembered.

Then she saw her.

Shella.

Curled into the same corner booth, long legs crossed, red lipstick perfectly painted on her mouth, a silver chain hanging around her neck like it held secrets. She looked up, and for a moment, they both just stared.

“Damn,” Shella whispered, blinking once, as though she couldn’t believe it. “Desny. Des-freaking-ny.”

Desny smiled. “I didn’t think I’d find you here.”

Shella stood and pulled her into a long, tight hug. “I didn’t think you’d come back.”

“I didn’t either,” Desny admitted.

They sat, and for a while, they just looked at each other. Shella’s eyes still sparkled with that dangerous glint —

mischievous and knowledge in equal measure. But something was different now. Softer. Wounded, maybe.

“You’ve changed,” Shella said, finally. “In a good way. Stronger. Still beautiful. More... still.”

Desny tucked a lock of hair behind her ear. “You haven’t changed at all.”

Shella laughed. “Lie again, and I’ll slap you.”

They both laughed — and suddenly, it was like the years hadn’t passed.

But the laughter died quickly.

“Klaven’s still here,” Shella said softly. “He never left.”

The name hit like a storm against glass. Desny’s smile faltered, but she didn’t look away. “I wasn’t asking.”

“I know. But I figured you should.”

A long pause settled.

Shella leaned back, playing with her glass. “You still think of him?”

“I dream of him,” Desny replied. “But in those dreams, he never stays.”

Shella nodded. “Sounds like Klaven.”

They sat in silence again. A different kind this time — heavy, tinged with regret, but not painful. Just true.

Then, the café door opened.

Desny didn't turn right away. But Shella's eyes widened a fraction, her posture straightening slightly.

Desny could feel him before she saw him.

The pull in her stomach. The sudden awareness of her breathing. The electricity that danced up her spine like recognition.

She turned.

And there he was.

Klaven.

Dark hair longer than she remembered. Stubble framing his jawline. His black coat soaked at the shoulders from rain. His eyes — storm grey — met hers instantly.

And the years collapsed.

He didn't smile. Neither did she.

But something passed between them.

Recognition. Memory. Wound.

Desny's voice caught in her throat. She hadn't prepared for this moment — hadn't believed it would come so soon.

Klaven stepped closer, his gaze not wavering.

“Desny.”

Her name in his voice still made her heart ache.

She steadied herself.

“Klaven,” she said, quietly. “Still brooding, I see.”

He allowed himself the smallest smile. “Still dangerous, I see.”

Shella stood abruptly. “Well, damn. Looks like I’ll need to order more coffee.”

Chapter Two: Velvet Shadows

The shadows in **Velvet Café** had always been soft — but tonight, they clung tighter to the walls, hugging corners, and whispering possibilities.

Desny hadn't moved.

Klaven stood across the table, his gaze locked on hers like it was some old battlefield, one neither of them had truly walked away from. The small, steady drumbeat of jazz in the background only heightened the silence.

Shella cleared her throat.

“Well. This is awkward,” she muttered. “Or sexy. Depending on your damage level.”

Klaven looked away for a second, lips twitching. Desny didn't. She was still reading him — the angles of his face, the slight crease beneath his left eye, the shift in his jaw when he said nothing. His silence always spoke the loudest.

“You look older,” she said finally.

“You look the same,” he answered.

“I don't know if that's a compliment or just a lie.”

Klaven shrugged. “I don't lie to you.”

Desny's smile was faint. "You did once."

Shella's eyes widened. "Okay! You two definitely need wine and privacy. I'm going to... order more muffins. Or set the place on fire. Whichever feels less tense."

She walked away — and Desny suspected it wasn't the first time Shella had retreated from heat that wasn't hers to handle.

Klaven sat down across from her, his eyes not leaving her face.

"I didn't know you were back," he said.

"I didn't plan to stay."

"But you came to the Velvet first."

She didn't reply. She didn't need to.

The silence settled again — not cold, but simmering. Like something slow-cooking just beneath the skin.

Klaven leaned back. His presence was heavier now. More masculine. The years had given him edges, depth. But his voice still carried that soft rasp that once whispered promises in dark dorm rooms.

"What are you painting these days?" he asked.

Desny sipped her coffee, her lips brushing the cup slowly, deliberately. "Dreams. Scars. Lovers I never had."

His jaw tightened slightly. He noticed. She meant him to.

“And you?” she asked. “Still breaking things?”

Klaven smirked faintly. “Only when they’re worth breaking.”

Their eyes locked again.

And just for a second, she remembered — how it felt when he touched the inside of her wrist like it was a sacred space. How his breath on her neck used to write poems she never dared say aloud.

She broke the stare.

“Anyway,” she said, softer now. “I didn’t come back for you.”

“Good,” Klaven replied. “Because I didn’t stay for you.”

But the way his voice dipped on the word *you* — it said otherwise.

Meanwhile, somewhere across the city...

Shella tapped her heels against the bar counter of **Jazzpit Lounge**, a dim-lit underground cocktail den in east Kaken.

The glass of red wine in her hand hadn’t been touched. She was waiting.

She looked up just as the door opened — and there he was.

Clever.

Still dressed like he didn't care about how dangerously good he looked — button-down shirt undone at the top, sleeves rolled, eyes hidden behind sleek glasses. That unreadable smirk resting like a secret on his face.

“You're late,” Shella said.

“You're impatient,” he countered, sliding into the booth across from her.

“Still talking like you know me.”

“I do,” Clever said, resting his arms on the table. “Too well.”

Shella leaned forward. “Then you also know I don't do second rounds.”

“And yet you called.”

“I didn't say it was for that.”

Clever's smile barely curved. “But you wore red.”

Shella rolled her eyes — but her heart was doing backflips.

He was too calm. Too composed. Too in control. And that pissed her off — because no one could undo her faster than Clever.

“You think I'm still yours,” she said coldly.

“I know you’re not anyone’s,” Clever said. “But that doesn’t mean I don’t remember the way you sounded when—”

“Don’t,” she cut him off. Her voice was quiet, but firm.

Clever raised an eyebrow. “So sensitive. You used to love the tension.”

She took a slow sip of her wine, her lipstick leaving a mark on the rim. “I still do. But not when I’m the only one tied up in it.”

Silence.

Then, his voice — low, rougher this time: “You’re not.”

And suddenly, the air around them shifted.

Back at Velvet...

Desny stood to leave.

Klaven rose too, his movements echoing hers — the way he used to when they were younger. Like their bodies still remembered each other, even if their minds didn’t want to.

“Will I see you again?” he asked.

Desny paused at the door.

She turned, her silhouette framed by the café’s soft lamplight.

“That depends,” she said.

“On what?”

She stared at him for a long moment.

“On whether you plan to say what you should have said seven years ago.”

Then she stepped into the night, leaving Klaven in velvet shadows and the echo of a chance he once shattered.

Chapter Three: The Straiden Pact

Five Years Ago Straiden University The Night It Rained Too Hard

The rain hadn't stopped for hours.

Sheets of water lashed against the tall windows of the west dorm tower, smearing city lights into streaks of gold and blue. Inside Room 3C, the walls vibrated with laughter, music, and whispered games that only mattered in the moment.

There were six of them — bodies draped across the couch, floor, and beanbags, their cups half-full with bad rum and campus juice. The warm glow of candles flickered across their skin like fire teasing secrets loose.

Desny, in a black crop top and oversized hoodie, sat curled up on the floor, her bare feet brushing against the wood. She was sketching something in a faded notebook, her pencil moving in gentle, curved strokes.

Klaven sat behind her on the arm of the couch, tall, smug, and effortlessly magnetic. He leaned forward occasionally, glancing down at her drawing, never asking — just watching. His hand hovered above her hair, not quite touching.

She felt him.

She always did.

Shella was curled on the windowsill, one leg dangling, cigarette burning slowly between her fingers. Her red dress was scandalously short, her eyes lazily locked on **Clever**, who was pretending not to notice her — or failing miserably at it.

Shinah laid back on the beanbag chair, headphones in, head tilted up like she was listening to the rain, not the music. She hadn't said much, but she never did unless it mattered.

And in the corner — sipping wine like she was at a wedding, not a dorm party — sat **Julie**, writing poetry into her phone with furrowed brows. Her glow was always subtle but powerful.

Desny looked up from her sketch.

“Let's make a pact,” she said.

Klaven raised an eyebrow. “About what?”

She shifted so she was facing everyone now. Her voice was dreamy, but clear. “Let's promise something. All of us. Before we finish college. Before we scatter and forget each other.”

Clever snorted. “I already forgot three of your birthdays.”

Shella threw a pillow at him.

“No, I mean something real,” Desny insisted. “Something that will hold us together.”

Shinah sat up slightly. “This sounds like something emotional.”

“It is,” Desny said, smiling. “I want us to promise that—no matter what happens—we won’t let the best parts of us fade. The love. The touches. The poetry. The nights like this.”

Shella exhaled a long breath of smoke. “You mean a blood pact, or like... a heart one?”

“Both,” Desny replied.

Klaven stood up slowly, walked to the kitchen drawer, and pulled out six empty shot glasses. He placed them on the table in a perfect line, filled them with dark rum.

“One shot for a promise,” he said. “Say it out loud. Then drink.”

Shella raised an eyebrow. “What are we, a coven?”

Klaven smirked. “Maybe.”

They stood — slowly, reluctantly, but united in a way that didn’t need words. Desny held her glass. Her voice trembled only slightly.

“I promise to keep loving like it’s the only truth I believe in.”

She drank.

Klaven stepped forward.

“I promise to never fake what I feel... especially when it’s real.”

He drank.

Shella followed.

“I promise to burn bright. Even when I know I’ll be the one getting hurt.”

She drank — all of it — without blinking.

Clever raised his glass, lips twitching.

“I promise not to say ‘I told you so’ when we all crash and burn.”

They laughed.

He drank.

Shinah was quiet for a moment, then whispered:

“I promise not to lose myself in someone else’s silence.”

And then she drank.

Julie didn’t say hers aloud. She wrote it on her phone, looked at it for a long moment, then drank without explaining.

They all clapped. The moment was messy, beautiful, raw.

But something else happened that night. Something no one ever said out loud.

1:04 a.m.

The group had dispersed. Julie and Shinah had left for their dorms. Shella had gone down to the vending machine. Clever had disappeared somewhere.

Desny was still sitting by the window. Sketching.

The door opened softly behind her.

She didn't turn.

"I knew you'd come back," she said.

Klaven's voice was barely audible. "I didn't want to leave."

She kept sketching. "But you did."

A pause.

Then she felt him move — quietly, slowly. He sat behind her, legs framing hers, his chest warm against her back.

"You scare me," he said into her neck.

Desny froze.

"Why?" she whispered.

"Because you make me feel things I don't know how to name."

Her pencil slipped.

He reached down, gently took it from her fingers, placed it on the windowsill.

Desny turned — slowly — to face him.

His eyes were darker now. And closer. His breath soft. Their knees touched. Their hands brushed.

“You want to kiss me,” she said.

Klaven didn’t deny it.

He moved closer, but not enough. He always made her close the gap.

So she did.

Their lips met slowly — like they were both remembering what kissing was supposed to feel like. It wasn’t fast. It wasn’t hard. It was *knowing*. And when his fingers brushed the back of her neck, she leaned into him like a wave surrendering to the shore.

The kiss deepened. Her fingers gripped his shirt. His hands curled around her waist.

It wasn’t just a kiss.

It was the start of something that was always meant to go wrong.

Because outside, Shella had just returned.

And she saw them through the cracked-open door.

Her expression didn't change.

But her heart did.

Chapter Four: Nallia Nights

Then — Nallia

The First Night They Broke the Rules

The waves crashed in rhythmic fury against the shore, sending foamy splashes up to the sand where **Desny** stood barefoot, her heels in one hand, her hair loose and tangled from the salty wind. The moon was thick and low — honey-colored, like it had secrets.

She looked over her shoulder.

Klaven was behind her, his shirt half-buttoned, sleeves rolled up. His eyes held something she hadn't seen before: a quiet kind of hunger. Not just for her body — but for everything she wouldn't say out loud.

“I shouldn't be here with you,” she whispered.

Klaven stepped forward slowly, the sand muffling his footsteps. “You're already here.”

Desny didn't move. Her body was humming — from wine, from the music still fading behind them at the beach house, from the weight of something that had been building since the first day at Straiden.

He was close now.

She could feel his heat. His breath. His hesitation.

Desny turned slowly. Their eyes locked — and there it was again: that magnetic pull, that unsaid thing that lived in the space between their heartbeats.

“Say it,” she breathed.

Klaven brushed a strand of her hair behind her ear.
“What?”

“That this isn’t just about tonight.”

He didn’t speak.

Instead, he kissed her.

And the world folded.

The kiss wasn’t polite. It wasn’t curious. It was *deprived*. Like he’d been starving for her for years and had finally given up on pretending otherwise.

Desny responded with equal abandon, her hands sliding under his shirt, fingers splayed across his back like she was trying to memorize the way he was built.

They stumbled backward into the sand, lips never parting, bodies grinding with the natural urgency of things meant to collide. The ocean roared beside them, and yet the loudest thing Desny could hear was the *sound of wanting* — between the quickening of her breaths and the way his voice broke when he whispered her name into her collarbone.

Clothes fell away slowly, not in haste but reverence.

Their bodies met in silence, broken only by stuttered gasps, teeth biting back moans, and hands that explored with unrelenting tenderness.

And when it was over — when their chests rose and fell in sync and the stars began to dim — Klaven turned to her and whispered:

“We just broke something we’ll never be able to fix.”

Now — Kaken City Shella’s Apartment

The slap wasn’t loud — but it echoed.

Desny stood in Shella’s apartment doorway, her cheek burning.

Shella’s arm was still raised, her expression unreadable.

“I saw you,” Shella said. “That night. On the beach.”

Desny was silent, her lips parted, breath uneven.

“You knew he was with me,” Shella went on, her voice shaking but not breaking. “We were a thing. Not official. But it was... it was something. And you—” She laughed bitterly. “You were always the one he wanted, weren’t you?”

Desny’s voice was barely audible. “It wasn’t supposed to happen.”

“It never is,” Shella snapped. “Until it does. Until you’re under him in the sand with my name still on his list.”

Desny stepped forward. “Shella, I—”

“No,” Shella said, backing away. “Don’t apologize now. Don’t wrap it in memory and rain and poetic regret. I’m not a scene in your sketchbook, Desny. I’m real. And I felt *everything* you two broke.”

The room was quiet.

Shella folded her arms, trying to keep her face from falling.

“I got over him,” she said. “Eventually. But you — you never let him go, did you?”

Desny looked away. “No.”

Shella nodded slowly. “Then don’t pretend this is just a visit.”

Desny met her eyes. “It’s not.”

Shella’s mask cracked — just a little. Her voice softened, brittle with emotion.

“Then promise me one thing.”

Desny waited.

“When you break him this time... don’t look surprised.”

Elsewhere — That Same Night Clever's Studio Loft

Shella pushed open the door before he could finish unlocking it.

“I don’t want to talk,” she said.

Clever didn’t say anything — just stepped aside and let her in.

She walked straight to the table, dropped her purse, and turned.

Clever stood by the window, his eyes still unreadable, his shirt half-unbuttoned.

“What’s this about?” he asked.

“I want to forget tonight.”

“Because of Klaven?”

“Because of everything.”

Clever walked over slowly. “That’s not how forgetting works.”

Shella stepped closer. “Then distract me.”

A pause. Their breathing was the only thing moving in the air.

“Say something,” she demanded.

“I don’t do promises.”

“Good,” she said, stepping into him. “Because I only want your body.”

A beat passed.

Then he kissed her — hard. The kind of kiss that was meant to silence, not soothe.

Clothes came off fast, need ripping through their restraint like wildfire.

But somewhere between the way he pulled her hair and the way she bit his shoulder — they both realized...

It wasn’t just their bodies they were trying to forget.

It was who they had become.

Chapter Five: Klaven's Reflection

Kaken City — Midnight Klaven's Apartment

The lamp cast a low golden glow across the hardwood floor, shadows curling along the walls like ghosts of the past. **Klaven** sat at the edge of the couch, staring at a half-empty whiskey glass and a crumpled sheet of paper in his hand — the fifth failed attempt at writing to Desny.

His jaw clenched. The silence in the room was loud. Too loud.

He looked down again.

*Desny,
There are nights I still wake up reaching for you.
Not just for your body — but for that version of myself I
only was when I was with you...*

He ripped it in half.

“Too soft,” he muttered.

But the truth was — there wasn't a version of this that didn't expose his weakness. She had always been his tether and his storm. His deepest want and his worst regret. And now she was back in Kaken City.

He had seen her from a distance earlier that day — the way she crossed the street with that old sketchpad still

tucked beneath her arm, the same soft sway to her walk.
Like Nallia hadn't faded from her bones.

God, she was beautiful.

Painfully so.

Flashback — Straiden University, Year Three Dorm Rooftop

"I don't believe in love," Klaven said, his arms behind his head as he lay on the gravel rooftop beside Desny.

She turned her face toward him, a soft smile playing on her lips. "You don't believe in gravity either, and yet here you are — pinned to the rooftop like the rest of us."

He chuckled. "Touché."

"I think love scares you," she said after a pause.

Klaven didn't respond.

But his hand found hers in the dark.

And Desny knew — *he felt it too.*

Now — Kaken City Desny's Art Studio

Klaven knocked. Once. Twice.

No answer.

He was about to walk away when he saw the window curtain sway. A shadow inside.

He reached for the doorknob. It turned.

He pushed it open, stepping inside slowly. The scent of paint, lavender, and something *warm* filled the air.

“Desny?” he called.

No response.

He took another step, eyes adjusting to the dim light.

And then — he saw her.

Asleep. On the studio floor. Her head resting against an open sketchbook. Pencil still in hand. Her sweater slightly off the shoulder, revealing a crescent moon tattoo on her collarbone. He’d kissed that spot once.

Or a thousand times.

She stirred slightly, sensing movement.

“Klaven?” Her voice was groggy.

He hesitated. “Yeah. It’s me.”

She sat up slowly, brushing her hair back, eyes still heavy with sleep and something else — confusion, maybe. Or longing.

“You came.”

“You left your door unlocked.”

She smirked faintly. “I stopped being scared of break-ins the day my heart was broken in broad daylight.”

Klaven looked down. “Desny—”

“Don’t,” she said, her voice fragile but firm. “Not yet.”

He crossed the room anyway.

And sat down beside her.

Silence fell again — but this time it didn’t hurt. It wrapped around them like a blanket.

He looked at her sketchpad. A drawing of him. Sleeping. Shirtless. With her hand on his chest.

“You still draw me,” he whispered.

“You never really left,” she replied, not looking up.

He turned toward her. “Do you want me to?”

Desny blinked.

For the first time in years — Klaven wasn’t hiding behind charm or sarcasm.

And neither was she.

“I want to,” she said, voice shaking. “But I can’t.”

He leaned closer. “Then stop pretending you don’t miss me.”

Her breath caught.

“Because I miss you,” he said. “In every damn room I walk into. Every woman I try to love. Every dream I wake from. It’s always you.”

She looked at him now — really looked.

And for one fragile second — she leaned in.

Their lips almost touched.

But then — a knock.

Sharp. Fast. Urgent.

Desny jolted up. “Who—?”

Before she could finish, the door creaked open.

And **Durban** stood there.

Tall. Angry. And holding something in his hand.

A photo.

Of Klaven and Desny. In Nallia.

Kissing.

Chapter Six: The Past Catches Up

Desny's Art Studio — Moments Later

The silence that followed **Durban's** appearance was suffocating.

His eyes burned with something between rage and disbelief. His broad chest rose and fell with deep, measured breaths. His fingers tightened around the photograph.

Desny stood up, her heart pounding, her lips still tingling from the nearness of Klaven's.

"Durban," she said, cautiously.

He stepped forward, slow and deliberate. "So it's true."

Klaven rose too, shielding nothing. "What exactly is true?"

Durban held up the photograph — faded slightly at the edges but unmistakably damning. **Desny and Klaven** in a passionate kiss beneath the archway at **Straiden University**, their eyes closed, hands tangled in each other's hair.

"You promised it was over," Durban whispered, not taking his eyes off Desny. "You said there was nothing left."

"That photo is five years old," Desny replied, trying to remain calm. "Before—"

“Before me?” Durban snapped. “Before I pulled you out of the mess he left you in? Before I gave you something stable, something real?”

Klaven raised an eyebrow. “Is that what you call it? Stability through guilt-tripping her into staying?”

Durban’s fists clenched. “Don’t push me.”

Desny stepped between them. “Stop it. Both of you.”

Her voice cracked at the end, and the strength she’d tried to summon failed her. She turned to Durban, her voice quieter now.

“You weren’t supposed to see that photo. It was buried for a reason.”

“Who took it?” Klaven asked.

She hesitated.

Durban answered first. “Victor.”

Klaven blinked. “Victor? As in *my* Victor?”

Desny nodded slowly. “He... he never liked that we were together. He said we weren’t good for each other. That you would destroy me.”

Klaven’s jaw clenched.

“And you believed him?”

“No,” she said quickly. “But after Nallia... after we fell apart, I was vulnerable. Durban helped me. He gave me a job, a place to stay—”

“And now what?” Durban cut in. “Now you go back to him?”

She looked away.

“I don’t know.”

The words hung in the air like shattered glass. No one moved.

Finally, Klaven took a breath. “I’m not here to steal you away.”

Desny’s eyes shot up to his.

“I came because I needed to know if there was still something worth fighting for.”

“And is there?” she asked.

He took a step closer. His voice dropped.

“There’s everything.”

But she couldn’t answer. Not now. Not with Durban standing there, his heart breaking in real time.

“I need air,” she whispered, brushing past both men.

Outside — Streets of Kaken City

The night air was cool, brushing Desny's skin like fingers she couldn't see. Her mind raced.

She hadn't seen Victor in years. But if he'd held on to that photo all this time... what else had he kept? And why release it now?

She pulled out her phone. Hands shaking.

She dialed.

One ring.

Two.

He picked up.

Victor.

"Well. Didn't think I'd hear from you again."

"I need to talk. Now."

He chuckled. "I figured you might. The truth has that effect."

Meanwhile — Across Town Natty's Return

The bus slowed as it approached **Masee Town's** old station. **Natty** stared out the window, her eyes tired but burning with purpose.

She stepped off with a single duffel bag and a sealed envelope. Her heels clicked on the pavement as she walked toward a parked cab.

“Where to, miss?” the driver asked.

She hesitated.

“Take me to **Kaken City General Hospital.**”

“Visiting hours are over.”

“I’m not visiting. I’m claiming what’s mine.”

Chapter Seven: The Unseen Wounds

Victor's Apartment – 11:47 PM

The hallway outside Victor's door smelled like old paint and dust, but Desny barely noticed. Her heart was beating so fast it echoed in her ears. The phone call had been cold, clipped — just like him.

She knocked once.

Then again.

The door creaked open.

Victor stood there, shirtless, a silver chain glinting against his chest. His apartment behind him was dimly lit, abstract canvases hanging crookedly, a whiskey bottle open on the table.

“Still wearing guilt like perfume?” he said flatly.

Desny stepped inside. “What the hell was that, Victor? The photo? Durban? What game are you playing?”

Victor shut the door. “No game. Just setting fire to lies that should've been torched years ago.”

She turned on him. “Why now?”

He poured a drink. “Because he's back. And because you're still pretending he didn't destroy you.”

Her voice cracked. “He didn't.”

Victor's gaze hardened. "Didn't he? I watched you unravel, Desny. The girl who painted galaxies with her hands became a ghost."

She fell silent.

He walked closer, lowering his voice. "You cried in your sleep for months. You stopped eating. You flinched every time you heard his name."

Desny closed her eyes.

"That wasn't love, Desny. That was obsession."

"Maybe," she whispered, "But it was *mine* to have. You had no right."

Victor stared at her for a long time. Then he set the drink down.

"There's more you don't know."

Her eyes flicked to his. "What do you mean?"

He stepped toward a drawer, pulled it open, and handed her an envelope. Inside were **letters** — hand-written, dated, sealed. Each one addressed to her... from **Klaven**.

"I took these from your mail."

Desny's knees nearly gave out.

"You *what*?"

“I thought I was protecting you. But maybe I was just protecting myself.”

She tore one open, her hands trembling. Klaven’s handwriting. His words. Page after page.

He’d written to her. Over and over. After Straiden. After Nallia. After everything.

And she’d never known.

Her tears came slowly, one by one. Silent. Burning.

“You stole my truth,” she whispered.

Victor couldn’t meet her eyes.

Straiden University – Same Night

Klaven sat on the edge of the old university fountain, fingers tracing the cracked stone. Everything had changed — the buildings, the skyline, the scent of youth. Except the ache in his chest.

He remembered the day he first kissed Desny right here. Her laughter. Her wild curls catching the wind. The moment she’d made him believe in art again.

Now it was all splinters and dust.

“Still chasing ghosts?” came a voice behind him.

He turned.

Natty.

She stepped out of the darkness, her heels echoing against the concrete. Her beauty was untouched by time — but her eyes had hardened.

Klaven rose slowly. “Natty...”

“Miss me?”

He swallowed. “I thought you were in Dubai.”

“I was. Until I read about your exhibition. And Desny’s name all over it.”

He took a shaky breath. “This isn’t the time—”

She cut him off. “I didn’t come for small talk.”

“What then?”

She reached into her bag and pulled out a photograph.

A little boy. Maybe four years old.

Dark curls. Sharp eyes. Familiar smile.

“Meet your son.”

Klaven staggered backward.

“I— What?”

“I was going to tell you. Years ago. But you left. And I didn’t want to raise a child in your chaos.”

He took the photo with shaking hands.

“He’s yours, Klaven. And he’s sick.”

Everything inside him collapsed.

Chapter Eight: When Old Fires Burn

Nallia hadn't changed — not really. The same ivy clung to the crumbling walls of Straiden University, and the air still smelled like a mix of lavender and old paper. Desny stood by the rusted gate, her suitcase by her heel, her heart caught between yesterday and now.

It had been three years.

Three years since she'd run from Klaven.

Three years since she'd kissed him in the rain and left before the sun could ask questions.

Now, she was back — for her doctoral thesis, officially. But the truth? She had unfinished heartbeats in this city.

She walked into the library, Straiden's heart, her heels softly echoing over the old wooden floors. Sunlight filtered through the stained-glass windows, casting reds and golds across the rows of ancient books.

Then she saw him.

Klaven.

He was standing by the psychology section, back turned, tall as ever, broader now. His dark curls were shorter, his jawline sharpened by time. He looked like memory — one she'd tried and failed to erase.

Their eyes met.

Time paused. The world narrowed.

“Desny,” he said, voice a husky mix of surprise and longing.

“Klaven.”

It wasn’t dramatic. No hug. No tears. Just a heatwave between them, as if the years apart had only thickened the air.

“You’re back,” he said, stepping closer.

“For my thesis.”

“Right,” he said with a nod, though his eyes flicked to her lips. “Nothing to do with me.”

She tilted her chin. “Don’t flatter yourself.”

He grinned. That grin — the one that used to undo her clothes before his hands even moved.

“You still lie the same way,” he murmured.

They stood in silence, eyes holding onto each other. A thousand unspoken words pulsed between their bodies.

“Can I buy you a coffee?” he asked.

She paused. “What if I say no?”

“I’ll follow you anyway.”

She laughed — the first real laugh in weeks.

The coffee shop was tucked behind the library, warm and dark, the kind of place that encouraged secrets and second chances.

They sat across from each other. The space between them felt charged — like every inch was a dare.

“You’re different,” he said.

“I had to be,” she replied. “After us.”

He leaned forward, his voice lower. “You haunted me.”

She blinked.

“I hated you for leaving,” he continued. “But I couldn’t hate the memory of your kiss. Or your laugh. Or the way your skin tasted at midnight.”

Her breath hitched.

“I tried to move on,” he said.

She looked at him. “Did you?”

“No one’s ever touched me like you. Not just skin — but soul. I’ve been half a man since you left.”

Her hand trembled slightly as she reached for her cup.

“I thought you didn’t want me anymore,” she whispered.

“I was scared. Of how much I did.”

He reached across the table, his fingers brushing hers.

“Desny,” he said, voice thick, “come back to me.”

She stared at him, heart racing.

“Not yet,” she said softly. “But... maybe soon.”

And he smiled — the way a man smiles when he knows the storm is coming back home.

Chapter Nine: Rainfall Confessions

Desny didn't mean to visit the rooftop of the Straiden dormitories that night — it had always been their spot. Hers and Klaven's. A place where the wind tangled with whispered secrets and moonlight fell like silver blessings on bare shoulders.

She climbed the stairs anyway.

The rain had just stopped. The city of Nallia shimmered below her — blurred streetlights, glistening pavements, and distant music humming through the night air.

She stood still for a moment, letting the wind kiss her skin, pulling her coat tighter. She wasn't sure why she came. Maybe to chase old ghosts. Maybe to let them catch her.

And then — as if summoned by thought — she heard a step behind her.

Klaven.

He didn't speak. Just walked forward and stood beside her.

"You always did know how to find me," she murmured without turning.

"You were never really lost," he replied.

They stood there, shoulders barely brushing, hearts pounding like the rain still falling in their memories.

“Do you remember what you told me the first time we stood here?” Desny asked, eyes fixed on the glowing horizon.

“I said...” Klaven’s voice softened. “That if I ever loved anyone, it would be here, under the stars. And it would be you.”

She turned to him slowly. “And do you still believe that?”

He looked at her like a prayer — reverent, aching, unsaid.

“I never stopped believing that,” he said. “Even when I hated you. Even when I tried to forget your scent on my pillows.”

Silence. Heavy and trembling.

Then Desny stepped closer. Close enough to feel the rise and fall of his breath. Close enough to see the storm in his eyes.

“I missed you,” she whispered.

Klaven’s hand rose slowly, brushing a raindrop from her cheek — or was it a tear?

“I dreamt of you,” he said. “Of your voice. Your hands. Your lips... God, your lips.”

She didn’t wait.

She kissed him.

Not gently — not cautiously — but like someone reclaiming the air after drowning.

His arms wrapped around her, urgent and trembling, lifting her slightly off her feet as he deepened the kiss. Her fingers tangled in his damp hair, her body pressing into his as if trying to rewrite all the lonely nights they'd lived apart.

The rooftop disappeared.

Nallia disappeared.

Only the thrum of blood, the whisper of breath, the heat of lips and tongue — lost in the poetry of a kiss that had waited far too long.

When they finally pulled apart, Desny rested her forehead against his.

“Let’s not mess it up this time,” she said.

Klaven smiled, brushing his thumb across her mouth. “Let’s mess it up in new ways — just never by walking away again.”

Chapter Ten: The Sound of His Heart

It had been three days since the rooftop kiss, and Desny could still feel the echo of Klaven's hands on her body — the way his fingertips remembered her skin like sacred scripture, the way his lips had memorized her fears and turned them into flame.

But this wasn't high school. This wasn't a weekend fling.

They were older now. Sharper. More fragile, perhaps — because this time, love came with shadows. With years they couldn't erase. With choices they still hadn't made.

Desny sat alone in the courtyard of Straiden University that morning, sipping slowly from a flask of warm cinnamon tea. Her thoughts raced, but her heart felt still — like it was waiting.

And then, she heard his footsteps.

No one else walked like Klaven. Measured. Confident. Quiet, like someone who had nothing to prove anymore.

He slid into the seat beside her without a word.

They didn't speak at first. Just sat there, shoulder to shoulder, letting the silence speak for them.

"Do you regret it?" he asked finally.

She turned to him. "Regret what?"

"The kiss. The rooftop. Us."

She stared into his eyes — deep, searching, unafraid. “No,” she whispered. “I regret waiting this long.”

He exhaled slowly, his hand reaching out to gently curl around hers. “You once said love scared you,” he said softly. “That you were afraid it would consume you.”

“It did,” she said with a half smile. “You did.”

“Do I still?”

She nodded slowly. “Yes. But now I want to be consumed.”

His lips curved, eyes burning. “Then let me ruin you in all the right ways.”

That evening, Klaven took her out of the city. Past Masee town, through winding hills that caught the golden hour and kissed the trees with light.

They arrived at a cottage — small, secluded, wrapped in vines and silence. A place where the world forgot to knock.

Inside, a fire was already crackling.

Desny walked in slowly, running her fingers over the smooth wood of the walls. There was only one room. One bed. No distractions.

Klaven stepped behind her, pressing his chest gently to her back. “I want to know you again,” he murmured.

“Not just your body — your stories. Your scars. The books you love. The nightmares you still have.”

She turned in his arms, facing him. “I’ve never stopped wanting you.”

He kissed her again — slow this time. As if tasting every syllable of her name. As if trying to memorize her breath.

Their clothes fell in whispers.

Their bodies rediscovered each other like verses of an unfinished poem — hungry and tender, fierce and delicate. She traced the lines of his chest with her fingers. He kissed the arch of her back, the inside of her wrists, the curve of her waist.

And when they finally lay tangled in each other beneath the wool blanket, her head on his chest, listening to the steady drumbeat of his heart, Desny whispered:

“This... this is home.”

Klaven pressed a kiss to her forehead and held her tighter. “Then stay.”

Chapter Eleven: Nallia Nights

The nights in Nallia had a rhythm — a music of their own. You could hear it in the hum of the distant train, the hush of the wind against cathedral glass, the soft shuffle of tired lovers returning home. It was a city that had loved before — and remembered what it meant to ache.

Desny woke to that music, bathed in the silver moonlight streaming through the cottage window. Klaven was still asleep beside her, bare chest rising and falling in quiet rhythm. His arm lay possessively around her waist, their legs still tangled in the softness of the sheets.

She didn't move — not right away. She just stared at him, studying the little things. The faint scar on his shoulder from a childhood fall. The crease between his brows he got when he was thinking deeply. The way his lips still looked like they had more to say, even in sleep.

She reached out gently and brushed a lock of hair from his forehead.

He stirred, eyes opening slowly, dreamily.

“Hey,” he said, voice gravelly from sleep.

“Hey,” she whispered back, smiling.

He pulled her closer, their bare skin pressing together in that electric way that always made her heart skip a beat.

“Did I fall asleep on you?” he asked, his lips moving lazily along her collarbone.

“You did. You earned it.”

He smirked. “You say that like I ran a marathon.”

“You did. Just... horizontally.”

Klaven laughed, the sound low and warm, vibrating against her skin.

She curled into him, her hand trailing down his chest, slow and light, until she felt him shiver.

“Desny,” he warned softly, voice thickening. “If you keep that up, I’m not letting you leave this bed today.”

“Who said I was planning to leave?” she replied, her voice teasing.

He rolled her under him in one smooth motion, pinning her down with the kind of deliberate control that made her gasp.

“You really shouldn’t challenge a man who already wants to worship you.”

And he did.

With kisses, with whispered vows, with the kind of slow, deliberate touches that told her he wasn’t here for the thrill — he was here for *her*. All of her. Every gasp. Every moan. Every hidden corner of her soul.

They didn’t rush it.

That morning in Nallia stretched into afternoon — coffee forgotten, phones ignored, time suspended.

They talked in between kisses. About their dreams. Their regrets. Their silent battles.

She told him about her fear of becoming too dependent on anyone.

He told her he feared never being enough.

“You’re already more than enough,” she whispered, fingers resting over his heart. “You always were.”

Later that evening, wrapped in a single blanket on the porch of the cottage, Klaven held Desny against his chest as they watched the stars bloom across the sky.

“You know,” he murmured, “if someone told me I’d be sitting here with you again after all these years... I wouldn’t have believed them.”

“And now?” she asked.

“Now I believe in miracles.”

She turned her head up to kiss his jaw, slow and warm. “Good. Because we’ve got a lot of years to make up for.”

They sat there long into the night — not saying much, just letting the silence between them hum with promise.

And Nallia, ever the romantic city, cradled their secrets in the arms of the stars.

Chapter Twelve: The Secret Apartment

Two days after their Nallia escape, Desny and Klaven returned to Straiden, but something between them had shifted.

Straiden felt smaller now. Less hostile. Less cold.

Or maybe that was just love blooming in strange places.

Klaven wasn't ready to move back into his old campus apartment — not with memories of Julie still stained in every corner. So instead, he brought Desny to a secret apartment he kept in the older part of Masee Town. One he never told anyone about — not even Victor.

"I used to come here when I wanted to disappear," he told her as he unlocked the door. "Now I just want to be found."

The apartment was cozy. Rustic. A fireplace with no fire. A fridge full of aged wine and untouched chocolate. It was a place made for escape.

Or romance.

"You live like a poet here," Desny whispered, walking through the dim-lit space, running her fingers across the dusty piano keys.

"I've never brought anyone here," he admitted.

She turned to him, eyes wide. "Not even..."

He shook his head before she could finish the name. “No one but you.”

That night, in the quiet glow of candlelight, Desny danced barefoot on the wooden floor, wearing nothing but his oversized shirt and a smile.

Klaven sat back, watching her, his heart beating too loud for someone so calm.

“I used to think love was supposed to feel like fire,” he said. “But you feel like moonlight. Quiet, soft, inevitable.”

She came to him slowly, straddling his lap, her hands cradling his face.

“Moonlight still burns,” she whispered. “Just differently.”

Their kisses were slower that night — deeper. The kind of kisses that didn’t rush to undress. The kind that meant *you’re safe here. You’re home.*

He lifted her gently, carrying her to the old couch by the window, where they could see the Masee skyline flickering like distant promises.

They made love like they were writing a letter in cursive — careful, curved, lingering.

When she cried afterward — not from sadness, but from being overwhelmed — Klaven just held her tighter.

“I’m scared,” she whispered.

“Of what?”

“That this is too good to last.”

He kissed her temple, pulling her even closer. “Then let’s make every second worth remembering.”

Chapter Thirteen: The Green-Eyed Moment

Shinah had always been subtle with her affections — the type to hide desire behind books, affection behind sarcasm. But tonight, she wasn't hiding.

Not from Desny. Not from Klaven. And not from herself.

Desny and Klaven were walking across campus one evening when Adie — the gossip queen of Straiden — saw them. They were laughing, fingers lightly linked, her head tilted back in that carefree way that love makes possible.

By morning, everyone knew.

And Shinah? She heard it from three separate mouths before breakfast.

Her chest tightened.

She had spent months watching Klaven from afar, thinking that her silence gave her the moral high ground. That maybe, just maybe, he'd see her waiting in the wings.

Instead, Desny — the transfer girl with the fire-colored braids and honeyed voice — had slipped into his world like she belonged there.

And the worst part?

She *did*.

Later that day, in the Straiden library, Shinah confronted Desny.

“You two seem... cozy,” Shinah said, pretending to skim a book she wasn’t even reading.

Desny didn’t look up. “We are.”

Shinah’s fingers tightened around the spine of the book.

“You know he’s not over Julie, right?”

Desny finally looked at her — calm, sure, devastating.

“I know. But he’s over *waiting* for something better.”

That night, Klaven and Desny met again in the secret apartment. He came with two bags — one with wine, the other with old photos.

“What’s this?” she asked.

“Memories I never shared with anyone,” he said. “Not even Julie.”

They sat on the floor, backs against the couch, going through picture after picture. Klaven as a boy. Klaven during his rebel phase. Klaven in love. Klaven alone.

“Why now?” she asked after the last photo.

“Because I want you to know all of me,” he replied. “Even the parts I tried to forget.”

She leaned over and kissed him softly. “I want it all.”

They didn't make love right away. First, they talked.
About fears. Regrets. First crushes. Heartbreak.

And then — when the words ran out — they undressed
each other slowly, reverently, as if shedding more than
clothes.

She traced the stories on his skin.

He memorized the scent of her hair.

They didn't rush.

This wasn't lust.

This was something holier.

Chapter Fourteen: A Past That Echoes

Kaken City was never just a city. For Desny, it was a memory sealed in concrete — an echo of a life she left behind.

She hadn't been back in years, not since that rainy December when her mother had driven away with a suitcase and a goodbye she never explained.

So when she and Klaven decided to take a weekend away, she didn't tell him that Kaken was more than a name on the map. She just said, *"Let's go somewhere we can get lost."*

And they did.

The city was loud. Bright. Reckless. A heartbeat louder than Masee and twice as tempting.

Their hotel was high-rise and modern, with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the skyline. From the 18th floor, the city looked peaceful — like chaos wrapped in light.

On the first night, they got drunk on sweet wine and forbidden dancing. Desny wore a black satin dress, legs bare, lips berry-red. Klaven couldn't stop looking at her. Like every turn of her body was a challenge.

They stumbled back to the hotel close to midnight, both laughing — flushed, tipsy, alive.

"I think I'm addicted to you," he murmured against her neck as she unlocked the door.

She turned slowly, catching his collar in her fingers.
“Then lose yourself in me.”

They didn’t make it to the bed.

Her back hit the door softly, his hands roaming, his mouth finding hers with urgency. Each kiss was a promise. Each gasp a vow. He lifted her easily, her legs wrapping around him, her body already trembling with anticipation.

It was wild. Hungry. Honest.

When they finally collapsed on the carpeted floor, breathless and tangled, Desny whispered, “I used to be afraid of feeling this much.”

Klaven kissed her cheek. “Then feel everything. With me.”

But the next morning brought cold clarity.

Victor had texted again.

And this time, he wasn’t asking.

He was warning.

“You’re not the only one with secrets, Desny. Tell Klaven the truth before I do.”

She stared at the message for minutes, her fingers frozen over the screen.

Klaven was in the shower, humming some tune she didn't recognize.

And Desny knew.

The past she had buried in Kaken was clawing its way back.

Chapter Fifteen: The Truth Between Us

Desny sat at the edge of the hotel bed, a white towel wrapped loosely around her, her wet curls dripping onto her shoulders. The city still pulsed outside their window — oblivious to the war starting in her chest.

Klaven came out of the shower shirtless, toweling his hair. He looked relaxed, glowing even, and it made everything harder.

She held up her phone silently, the screen displaying Victor's latest message.

His smile faded instantly. He didn't take the phone. He didn't have to.

"What truth, Desny?"

Her heart thudded. "I was with Victor. Before Straiden. Before you."

Klaven sat beside her slowly, a muscle twitching in his jaw.

"Okay."

"No... not just *with* him," she said, voice cracking. "We were engaged."

Silence thickened the room like smoke.

Desny continued, afraid that if she didn't say it all now, it would rot them from within.

“He was charming at first. Then obsessive. Controlling. He made me leave Masee. He made me *run*.”

Klaven finally spoke, his voice low, shaking. “And you thought that would stay buried forever?”

“I wasn’t ready to lose you,” she said. “Not after what we’ve had.”

Klaven stood, walking to the window, arms folded tight.

“I thought I knew you.”

“You *do*,” she whispered. “This is me trusting you with everything.”

He turned to her, eyes wild and hurt. “I’ve been honest with you since day one. I told you about Julie. About how broken I was. And now, this—?”

Desny stood too, letting the towel slip down just enough to bare her vulnerability, her truth. “You’re the only man I’ve ever wanted this badly. The only one who made me feel seen. Protected. *Loved*. I was scared. But I’m not running anymore.”

Klaven stepped closer, the hurt in his eyes still there — but softening.

“You still should’ve told me before he did.”

“I know,” she said, touching his chest. “But I’m telling you now. Because I choose you.”

There was a long pause.

Then his lips found hers — not like before, not wild or hungry — but slow. Deep. Forgiving.

They kissed like people rebuilding something broken.

Later, they lay together, tangled under white sheets, her head on his chest.

“I don’t care what he says,” Klaven murmured. “I won’t lose you over your past.”

And Desny — brave and bare and finally honest — whispered, “Then we face him. Together.”

Chapter Sixteen: Storms We Don't Run From

Victor didn't wait long.

Two days after they returned from Kaken, a manila envelope showed up at Klaven's dorm door. No name. Just a Straiden University logo sticker on the back.

Inside:

- Printed photos of Desny and Victor — some romantic, some too private to be innocent.
- A USB drive.
- A note:
“You deserve to know who she really is. —V”

Klaven didn't open the USB.

He didn't need to.

Instead, he walked to Desny's apartment, hands in his jacket, eyes dark with something between betrayal and fear.

She opened the door in an oversized t-shirt, barefoot, her eyes lighting up — until she saw what he was holding.

“Oh God...”

He handed her the envelope.

Desny's knees buckled as she sank to the couch, sifting through her own shame in printed form.

“I never wanted you to see these,” she whispered, voice hollow.

“I don’t care about the pictures, Des,” Klaven said, kneeling in front of her. “What I care about is why he has them. Why he’s still trying to own you.”

She looked at him, her heart breaking all over again. “Because I let him. For too long. I was scared. I thought staying quiet was easier.”

Klaven reached up, brushing a tear from her cheek. “You’re not that girl anymore.”

She leaned forward, pressing her forehead to his. “I need to end this. For good.”

He nodded. “We’ll do it together.”

Later that evening, they went to Masee Town, to the quiet café where Desny knew Victor still lingered — haunting her old places like a ghost that refused to fade.

Victor was there. Alone. As if he’d been waiting.

When Desny walked in with Klaven by her side, Victor’s expression cracked.

“So this is how it ends?” he asked, standing.

“No,” Desny said clearly. “This is how I *take back my life*.”

Klaven stepped forward. “You send anything again — photos, videos, threats — I’ll have you arrested. And you know I can.”

Victor scoffed, “You don’t scare me.”

Klaven’s voice dropped. “You should be more afraid of a woman who’s no longer afraid of you.”

Victor faltered.

Desny pulled a flash drive from her bag and dropped it on the table.

“Everything I left with you? Here. I don’t want your secrets. And you don’t get to hold mine anymore.”

With that, she turned — and didn’t look back.

That night, Desny didn’t cry.

She and Klaven made love like survivors — slow, tender, powerful. She kissed every inch of his skin like it was a vow. He worshipped her body like it was sacred.

When he whispered, “You’re safe now,” she finally believed him.

And as dawn broke, they slept — wrapped in each other, no longer hiding from any storm.

Chapter Seventeen: The Morning After Courage

The sun rose slowly over Straiden, slipping through the cream curtains of Desny's apartment and bathing the room in warm gold. The early light traced the soft curve of her hip, rising and falling with each peaceful breath. Her skin glowed, kissed by morning and love alike.

Klaven stirred beside her, arms still wrapped around her waist. For the first time in months — no nightmares, no restless tossing. Just peace. The kind you only earn after weathering a storm and surviving it.

He studied her face, the softness in her expression, the faint smile that danced on her lips even as she slept.

He reached up and tucked a curl behind her ear. Her eyes fluttered open.

"Hey," she whispered.

"Hey," he smiled, voice husky from sleep.

Desny stretched lazily, sheets slipping slightly, revealing her bare back. "Last night felt like... a new beginning."

"It *was* a new beginning," Klaven said. "You chose yourself. And us."

She rolled toward him, her eyes shining. "You make me braver."

"And you," he murmured, brushing his lips against hers, "you make me whole."

Their kiss deepened, warm and unhurried, full of everything they hadn't said in words — the apology, the promise, the passion.

Klaven's hand roamed over her back, trailing down to her waist, gripping her softly. Desny sighed into the kiss, pulling herself closer until their bodies molded like they were meant to.

"Let's stay like this," she said against his lips, "forever."

"Tempting," he replied, pressing his forehead to hers. "But we both know you'll get hungry in thirty minutes."

Desny giggled, pushing him playfully onto his back. "You know me too well."

She climbed over him, straddling him with a slow, deliberate grace that left him breathless. Her fingertips traced the lines of his chest, teasing down to the edge of the sheets.

"I'm not hungry yet," she whispered, biting her lip.

He groaned. "You're gonna kill me."

She leaned down, her breath tickling his neck. "You'll die happy."

They made love again — slow and lazy, like Sunday morning jazz. Every kiss was unhurried, every touch deliberate. It wasn't about lust. Not this time. It was about connection. Healing. Celebration.

They didn't need words. Their bodies said everything.

Later, Desny stood in the kitchen in one of Klaven's hoodies, barefoot, flipping pancakes while music played softly in the background. Klaven sat on the stool, chin resting in his hand, watching her like she was art in motion.

"You're staring," she said, pouring syrup.

"Because I can't believe this is real," he said honestly.

Desny turned, walking over to him. "This is as real as it gets, Klaven. But only if we protect it."

He took her hand. "Then let's protect it. Starting with telling the others."

Desny hesitated. "You sure?"

"If we're serious," he said, "then no more hiding. Let's tell Shinah, Julie... even Durban."

Desny smiled. "Okay. But let's do it after breakfast. Because if Julie finds out first, she might scream loud enough to ruin these pancakes."

They laughed, clinking their mugs of hot chocolate like a toast.

To love.
To freedom.
To mornings that felt like home.

Chapter Eighteen: Every Corner We Never Kissed

The day began with promises and pancakes. By noon, Desny and Klaven were walking through the garden trail behind Straiden University — a secret pathway once hidden in their past lives, now revealed under the clarity of love reborn.

Their fingers were laced, warm palms exchanging silent messages: *I'm here. I see you. I'm not leaving.*

Desny paused near a wooden bench. “We used to pass this spot every Friday after lectures. Remember?”

Klaven nodded. “You always carried your laptop and an energy drink. You hated Fridays.”

“I hated feeling invisible,” she said, sitting. “I was afraid to love anyone too loudly.”

Klaven joined her. “I wish I had been louder back then. I wish I had held your hand in the halls, pulled you into my arms during those music festivals, told everyone you were mine.”

She leaned her head on his shoulder. “You didn’t need to shout it. I always felt it... deep down.”

A silence settled — the kind so soft it wasn’t empty, but full.

“I’ve changed,” Klaven whispered.

“I know,” Desny said. “You let your walls fall. Even the ones I didn’t know existed.”

“I was scared of becoming my father,” he admitted. “Scared that love would make me weak. But I was wrong.”

Desny turned, placing her hand on his chest. “Love doesn’t make us weak. It roots us.”

Klaven kissed her slowly, in full view of the walking trail. A kiss that said *I choose you — again, again, again.*

Later that evening, they met with Julie, Shinah, and Clever at a rooftop restaurant in Masee Town. The sky blushed orange with sunset as waiters passed trays of cocktails and music floated from the corner DJ booth.

Julie spotted them first.

“Oh. My. Actual. God!” she squealed, knocking over her chair in excitement.

Shinah blinked. “Is this—?”

Clever raised an eyebrow. “The reunion we’ve been praying for?”

Klaven wrapped an arm around Desny’s waist. “It’s official.”

Julie gasped. “You mean... you two are finally...”

“In love. Again. This time for real,” Desny said, smiling.

Shinah stood, clapping. “Somebody pour me a drink. I’m witnessing history.”

They all laughed, glasses clinking, tears and cheers mixing into one big mess of joy.

When they returned home, Klaven opened the door to Desny’s flat, holding her hand like he never wanted to let go.

Inside, it was dim and quiet. The air was scented with lavender from a candle she’d left burning.

She stepped out of her heels, walking to the center of the room.

He stood behind her, just watching. Admiring.

Desny slowly unzipped her dress, letting the fabric fall to the floor like water. She turned, now in just a lace slip, soft and glowing in the candlelight.

Klaven’s breath hitched.

“You’re everything I never let myself dream,” he said.

Desny reached for him, undoing his buttons, slowly, purposefully. “Then stop dreaming.”

Their bodies met like old friends reuniting, every movement slow and reverent.

That night wasn't about claiming — it was about discovering.

Every kiss was a question.

Every sigh was an answer.

They moved as one, like notes in a song only they knew.

It wasn't lust. It wasn't possession.

It was love — raw, deliberate, and without end.

When the candle finally flickered out, they lay in darkness, tangled together.

Klaven whispered against her hair, “Every corner I never kissed before — I'll make it up to you.”

Desny smiled, pressing her lips to his chest. “Then we better never stop loving.”

And they didn't.

Not that night.

Not ever.

Chapter Nineteen: The Things We Hide Behind Our Eyes

The rain started gently, tapping against the windowpane like a shy confession.

Desny sat cross-legged on Klaven's bed, wrapped in one of his oversized shirts, flipping through a photo album she found hidden beneath the desk. Most of the pictures were from Straiden University — blurry group shots at campus parties, class trips, and stolen selfies behind lecture halls.

But then she came across one that made her breath catch.

It was a picture of her — candid, untouched, and unforgettable. Her hair was blown by the wind, her eyes caught mid-laughter. She didn't even remember the moment being taken.

"You kept this?" she asked as Klaven entered the room holding two mugs of hot cocoa.

He looked at the photo. "It was always my favorite. You didn't know I was watching you that day."

"I didn't."

"I always was," he said, handing her a mug.

Desny set the album down, their fingers brushing. "You never said anything. Why?"

Klaven sat beside her. "Because I was a coward. Because loving you felt like standing on a ledge."

“And now?”

He met her gaze, slow and honest. “Now it feels like landing.”

That afternoon, they took a slow drive through the outskirts of Nallia. The city melted into green fields and old barns as they headed toward the lake — the same lake where their classmates used to sneak off to kiss and watch stars in first year.

Desny leaned her head against the window, watching raindrops race each other down the glass.

“Do you think it’s possible,” she asked, “for two people to fall in love twice... and deeper the second time?”

“I think,” Klaven replied, eyes on the road, “that sometimes the first fall just softens us. So we’re ready for the real one when it comes.”

They parked near the water. It was deserted, calm. Mist rose from the surface like a secret. Klaven pulled a blanket from the trunk and spread it on the grass, and they sat, warm drinks in hand, listening to the slow hum of nature.

“I used to come here after you left,” Klaven confessed. “Sometimes just to scream. Sometimes just to remember.”

Desny turned to him. “I never stopped writing about you. Every journal I kept had your name on a page.”

Klaven exhaled. “God, Desny. We wasted so much time.”

“Not wasted,” she corrected softly. “We were learning how to love right.”

Then she kissed him — not with urgency, but with reverence. A kiss that said, *Let’s stop grieving what we lost and start living what we still have.*

That night, back at the apartment, it wasn’t just love — it was *healing*.

Klaven lit candles. Desny played a soft playlist of their old favorite songs.

They bathed together, steam curling around them, the warmth of water nowhere near the heat between their hearts. He massaged shampoo into her hair, and she lathered his back, both laughing and shivering, droplets trailing down necks and shoulders.

Wrapped in towels, they moved to the bedroom, damp and dizzy with tenderness.

Desny traced the scar under Klaven’s ribs.

“I never asked where this came from,” she whispered.

“First year. Fell while chasing after you with a stupid valentine card.”

“You’re serious?”

“I was always serious about you.”

She kissed the scar.

Then the curve of his shoulder.

Then his lips.

And when they made love that night, it wasn't fireworks or explosions.

It was quiet. Slow. Intimate.

It was the kind of love that didn't ask to be watched — it asked to be *felt*.

They didn't need permission or performance.

They just needed each other.

Every sigh, every heartbeat, every whispered name was a language only they could speak.

After, Desny lay with her head on Klaven's chest, tracing circles with her fingertip.

"I wish I could bottle this moment," she murmured.

Klaven kissed her forehead. "It's already inside you."

"Promise me something," she whispered.

"Anything." "Don't ever let go again. Not even when I try to push you away."

He wrapped his arms around her tighter.

"Then don't run. And I swear, I'll never stop chasing you."

Chapter Twenty: Letters Never Sent, Words Finally Spoken

The early morning sun slipped lazily through the blinds, draping Klaven's apartment in a sleepy golden hue. Desny stirred, her arm thrown across Klaven's bare chest. He was still asleep, one hand resting on her waist, breathing deep and even — the kind of breath that only comes after surrender.

She smiled to herself.

For the first time in a long time, Desny felt... *whole*.

But reality had a way of knocking.

A soft *ping* from her phone. A message from Joan.

“Victor’s back in Masee. He's asking questions about you. Be careful.”

Desny's heart skipped. Not out of fear. But uncertainty. She had buried so many emotions, letters never sent, emotions never confessed — and Victor was a part of that. A chapter unfinished. A wound not fully closed.

Later that day, Desny sat by herself in a small café near the university — the same café where she and Victor had first met.

She opened her journal. Pages filled with dreams, doubts, desires — and Klaven.

But something urged her to turn to the very back. There, tucked between pages, was an old letter. Yellowed with time. Sealed but never delivered.

It was addressed:

To Klaven, if I ever find the courage.

She hesitated. Then opened it.

Klaven,

If you're reading this, it means I finally stopped pretending I didn't love you. I kept telling myself I'd forget you. That I'd outgrow you. That one day, I'd look at someone else and not feel like I'm betraying us.

But I didn't.

You're in the way I look at sunsets. In the space between heartbeats. In the silence after a song fades.

And I hate that you're so far. That we didn't fight harder.

But maybe... one day, we'll remember. Maybe one day, you'll find this, and we'll start over.

Maybe.

— Desny.

She wiped her eyes.

He already knew now. But reading her own words from a more broken time made her realize how far she had come.

She folded the letter back into her journal, and just as she did, a shadow fell across her table.

“Thought I’d find you here,” said a voice.

She looked up.

Victor.

He hadn’t changed much. Still wore tailored jackets. Still carried that same quiet intensity in his eyes.

But something *was* different.

He looked tired. Like a man who had been searching, not for her, but for peace.

“Can we talk?” he asked.

Desny nodded. “I think we need to.”

They walked through the Masee gardens — the same ones they used to escape to during the chaos of midterms and life.

Victor broke the silence. “I was angry. When you left. When you chose him.”

“I didn’t *choose* anyone,” Desny said softly. “I chose myself. I needed to find who I was without the noise.”

Victor nodded slowly. “I see that now. And maybe I never really saw *you*, Desny. I was in love with what you made me feel — not with the woman you were becoming.”

Desny touched his arm. “You were important to me, Vic. But you were not... *home*.”

Victor exhaled. “He is, isn’t he?”

Desny smiled. “Yes.”

There was no bitterness. Just a soft, aching acceptance.

They parted without promises. Without tears. Just two people who once held each other tightly, now releasing one another gently.

Back at Klaven’s, Desny found him on the balcony, shirtless again, painting.

She leaned on the doorframe. “So now you paint too?”

He grinned. “Trying to capture the way your eyes looked this morning. I’m failing.”

Desny walked over and kissed him softly. “You’re not.”

She sat beside him, and together they watched the clouds drift across Nallia’s sky.

“I saw Victor,” she said.

“I know,” Klaven replied.

“You’re not jealous?”

“I was,” he admitted. “But I trust you now. I trust *us*.”

Desny curled into his side.

“I burned that letter,” she whispered.

Klaven turned. “What letter?”

“The one I wrote you. Years ago. Before everything. I burned it because I don’t need it anymore. You’re here. That’s all the closure I need.

That night, they made love again — slower, deeper than before. Like two souls writing poetry on each other's skin. Every moan was a verse. Every sigh a rhyme. Every gasp a stanza.

There were no walls between them now. No pasts left to haunt. Just two lovers finding rhythm in the silence between words.

After, Klaven whispered, “What do you want now, Desny?”

She looked at him, fingers dancing over his chest.

“Everything,” she said. “With you.”

Chapter Twenty-One: What We Were Never Told

The Straiden air was unusually warm that afternoon. A honeyed breeze swept lazily through the campus grounds, rustling the petals of the jacaranda trees that lined the west garden near the art faculty.

Desny had always admired this part of the university — it was quiet, distant from the regular buzz of students rushing to beat class bells. But today, it wasn't the garden's beauty that held her attention.

Today, it was *Klaven*.

He stood a few feet away, speaking softly to a group of art students. The way he moved, the gestures of his hands, the gleam in his eyes when he described color theory — all of it made Desny fall in love with him *again*.

She watched from a bench under the tree, sipping iced tea, her heart oddly still and wildly full all at once.

It hit her — **peace**, that quiet realization that what she once feared had now become a kind of safety. Klaven was her anchor, but he didn't weigh her down. He let her drift into her own brilliance, but was always there when she returned.

He caught her watching. Smiled.

Her breath caught in her throat.

That night, Klaven found her on the rooftop of her apartment building. She had thrown a blanket over her shoulders and was staring into the wide expanse of Kaken City's distant lights.

"I missed you," he said.

Desny smirked. "You were just teaching for three hours."

"Still felt long," he said, sitting beside her.

She rested her head on his shoulder. "Remember when we used to sit like this and wonder if this—us—could ever be real?"

Klaven nodded. "And now I can't remember what it felt like *not* to have you."

There was a pause.

Then Desny whispered, "Do you ever think about the future?"

"All the time."

She turned. "And what does it look like?"

He brushed her hair back. "It looks like us... older. Still arguing about where to eat. Still painting and writing. Maybe in a little house somewhere in Masee with two dogs and a kitchen we both hate but never change."

Desny laughed. "You want dogs?"

“I want *you*. Dogs are negotiable.”

They laughed, their fingers entwining beneath the stars.

Then the laughter faded, giving way to a different kind of silence — the one that buzzes with electricity.

He kissed her. Not rushed. Not desperate.

Slow. Purposeful.

A kiss that said: *I'm not going anywhere.*

Inside, in her room lit only by the glow of bedside lamps and city lights beyond the window, Desny stood in front of Klaven.

“I want you to see me,” she whispered.

“I always do.”

“No,” she said, her voice trembling as she unbuttoned her blouse. “Not just my body. All of me. The scars. The parts I hide. The stories I’ve never said out loud.”

Klaven stepped closer.

“I’ve seen them,” he whispered, resting his hands on her waist. “I’ve seen your strength, your fear, your wild hope. I’ve loved every shade of you.”

She let the blouse fall.

And then — piece by piece — the rest.

And Klaven didn't rush. He held her gaze as his hands traced the lines of her collarbone, the slope of her spine, the softness of her hips. Like an artist caressing marble, learning every inch, not to possess — but to remember.

They sank into the sheets.

That night wasn't fire.

It was slow rain on warm skin. It was eyes locked through breathless seconds. It was her name whispered like a vow, like worship.

It was knowing — finally — what it meant to be *home* in another's arms.

Afterward, Desny lay on her stomach, her cheek on Klaven's chest.

"I'm scared," she whispered.

"Of?"

"This is too good. And I've lived long enough to know that good things don't always last."

Klaven tightened his hold. "Then we'll make it last. Even when it gets messy. Especially then."

He kissed her forehead.

"I've waited too long to find you again. I'm not letting go."

The next morning brought a different kind of intimacy.

They cooked together.

Klaven in pajama pants, Desny in his oversized T-shirt, frying eggs and teasing each other over burnt toast. They danced to old-school jazz as the coffee brewed.

And in that tiny kitchen, laughter echoing off the walls, something unspoken settled between them:

This wasn't just romance anymore.

This was **a life** they were building.

Together.

Chapter Twenty-Two: The Things We Almost Forgot

The air at Straiden University was shifting again — not in temperature or season, but in rhythm. It was as if everything had slowed just slightly, letting the winds of change creep in softly, unnoticed until they surrounded you.

Desny felt it first in her walks to class — students smiling at her, professors calling her by name, even the barista at the campus café remembering her usual. It wasn't popularity; it was presence. She was fully there — heart, mind, and body — no longer lost in the chaos of doubt or pain.

Klaven had done that.

Or maybe, she had done it for herself — and he had simply reminded her it was possible.

It had been a week since that night — the one where they bared everything. Since then, their connection had only deepened.

No more hiding.

No more “maybe later.”

They were in it, all the way.

But love, real love, doesn't pause the rest of the world.

And life was stirring outside their little bubble.

Klaven was offered an opportunity — a six-month artist residency in Vionden, a small coastal city in the north. Fully paid. Prestigious. The kind of break artists only dream of.

“I haven’t said yes,” he said over dinner, pushing his untouched pasta around with a fork.

Desny blinked. “Why not?”

“Because of you.”

She looked up, stunned. “You’re joking.”

“I don’t want to leave what we’re building.”

Desny took his hand. “What we’re building *isn’t that fragile.*”

Klaven searched her eyes.

“I love you, Klaven,” she said softly. “And that means I want you to go where your art needs to go. I’ll still be here. I won’t disappear.”

He smiled, exhaling a breath he didn’t know he was holding. “You always say the right thing.”

“No,” she said, smirking. “I just say the truth.”

That night, they didn’t make love like before.

They *held* each other. For hours.

And in the quiet of the room, something even deeper passed between them — a soul-level bond, where bodies were just an extension of everything they couldn't say aloud.

His lips found her temple, her shoulder, her palm.

Her fingers traced the stories on his skin — the mole on his neck, the scar on his wrist, the birthmark near his hip. She memorized him like scripture.

“I'll miss this,” she whispered.

He kissed her sternum. “You'll have it again. I'll come back.”

The next day, they made love with a sense of urgency. Of celebration. Of mourning.

They danced between laughter and longing, clinging and letting go.

Desny sat astride him, silhouetted against the golden light of morning, her hair falling like a curtain around their faces. His hands gripped her thighs, grounding himself in her. She moved like memory — slow, reverent — a farewell turned into music.

When they finally collapsed, she lay on his chest, listening to his heartbeat, branding the rhythm into her memory.

Days passed fast after that.

Klaven packed.

Desny threw herself into writing — her poetry becoming heavier, deeper, laced with intimacy and ache.

They didn't talk about the day of departure.

They just lived each moment.

Then came the morning.

Desny woke first. She stared at Klaven's sleeping face, memorizing it again.

She got up quietly, brewed coffee, and made toast the way he liked — undercooked and barely buttered.

When he woke, they didn't speak much.

What was there left to say?

At the bus stop, Klaven held her hand the entire time. His suitcase sat beside him like a silent witness.

"You sure you'll be okay?" he asked.

"No," Desny said honestly. "But I'll manage. And I'll be waiting."

He leaned forward and kissed her, slow and soft — the kind of kiss that didn't need witnesses.

Then he pulled back, touched her cheek one last time, and boarded the bus.

Desny stood alone on the pavement, the wind tugging her jacket as the bus disappeared down the hill.

A tear slid down her cheek.

Then another.

Then another.

But she didn't collapse.

She stood.

Watched.

Waited.

And whispered to herself, *He'll come back.*

That evening, back in her apartment, Desny opened her journal and wrote:

“Love is not in the staying.

Love is in the knowing that even in the leaving,

The promise remains.”

Chapter Twenty-Three: Letters on the Wind

The city lights of Nallia blurred through the rain-streaked window of Desny's apartment as she sat curled up in the corner of the worn leather sofa. The soft hum of the city was a distant lullaby, but inside, her heart throbbed with restless yearning.

Klaven was gone.

Six weeks now.

Every day without him felt like a slow erosion of her soul, a wind that whispered promises she desperately clung to but couldn't hold.

Her phone buzzed softly on the coffee table.

A message from Klaven:

"Miss you. Counting the days till I'm back in your arms."

Desny smiled through tears, fingers trembling as she typed back:

"Come back soon. The nights are colder without you."

She tucked her phone away and pulled out a small box — a collection of letters she'd written but never sent. Each envelope held a piece of her heart, words spilling from a place too vulnerable to speak aloud.

One letter read:

“Every time the wind blows, I imagine it carries my words to you, like invisible wings crossing the miles. I wonder if you hear them. If you feel me.”

The phone buzzed again.

This time, an email from Klaven:

“I found a little café in Vionden. It has a piano. Every night I play for you. Even when you’re not here.”

Desny’s breath hitched. She closed her eyes and imagined him there — fingers dancing over ivory keys, soft melodies spilling into the night like a serenade just for her.

She whispered into the silence, “I hear you. Always.” The weeks turned into months. And every day, Desny wrote. Letters filled with love, longing, forgiveness, and hope. Letters she’d never send.

Because some things are meant to be whispered on the wind — carried across time and space until the moment is right.

One afternoon, a knock came at her door.

Her heart raced.

When she opened it, standing there was Klaven — a little thinner, a little wearier, but with eyes that held the same fierce love.

No words were spoken.

They fell into each other's arms, breaths mingling, tears falling freely.

"I'm home," he whispered.

Desny smiled through her tears. "I waited."

That night, they made love like it was a sacred ritual.

Slow and worshipful.

Every touch was a promise.

Every kiss a vow.

Their bodies moved in perfect harmony — a dance of reunion, healing, and rebirth.

Klaven traced the lines of her back as if memorizing a map.

Desny whispered his name like a prayer.

And in that moment, under the soft glow of candlelight, the world outside ceased to exist.

The next morning, with sunlight filtering through gauzy curtains, they lay tangled together, wrapped not just in sheets, but in the unspoken truth:

No matter the distance, no matter the time — love finds its way home.

Chapter Twenty-Four: When Shadows Fade

The rain had finally stopped, leaving the streets of Kaken City glistening under the early morning sun. Desny walked slowly down the familiar avenue, the scent of wet earth and blooming jasmine filling the air. She breathed deeply, feeling lighter than she had in weeks.

Since Klaven's return, every moment had been a fragile dance — balancing joy with the shadows of their past.

Today, she was ready to face those shadows.

She met Klaven at their favorite café, the one with the cracked wooden floors and faded art on the walls. He was already there, seated by the window, a sketchpad in hand, fingers moving quickly but thoughtfully.

When he looked up, his eyes softened. “Morning.”

“Morning,” she smiled, sliding into the seat across from him.

He closed the sketchpad gently. “What’s on your mind?”

Desny hesitated. “I’ve been thinking about the things we didn’t say. The secrets we kept. The pain we buried.”

Klaven reached across the table, covering her hand with his. “We carry those shadows with us, but they don’t have to define us.”

She nodded, feeling tears prick her eyes. “I want to stop running from the past. To be honest with you... with us.”

Later, back at the apartment, they sat surrounded by old letters, photographs, and memories they had once hidden away.

Desny unfolded a letter from Victor — a mixture of apology and regret. Klaven shared a journal entry from his darkest days.

They read aloud, laughed, cried — the weight of years lifting little by little.

That night, the air was thick with anticipation.

Desny stood by the window, dressed in a silk robe, the fabric clinging to her curves. Klaven entered quietly, his gaze drinking her in.

He crossed the room slowly, hands tracing a path from her waist to her shoulders.

She turned to face him, breath catching as their lips met — soft at first, then deepening into a fiery crescendo.

Every kiss was a confession, every touch a healing balm.

Klaven lifted her gently, carrying her to the bedroom where candles flickered like tiny stars.

Their bodies moved in harmony, a language of love that had been years in the making.

She arched into him, surrendering fully.

He whispered against her skin, “You are my light, Desny.”

“And you are my home,” she replied.

Afterwards, they lay entwined, the quiet only broken by their synchronized breaths.

The shadows of their past had not disappeared — but they no longer controlled the space between them.

Together, they had learned to embrace the darkness, so the light could shine even brighter.

Chapter Twenty-Five: The Quiet Between Us

The golden haze of the late afternoon sun spilled through the curtains, casting warm pools of light across the wooden floors of Desny's apartment. The city outside hummed softly — distant car horns, murmurs of passing pedestrians — but inside, a profound quiet settled between them.

Desny and Klaven sat on the floor, backs against the couch, fingers entwined as they shared a simple bottle of wine. No words were necessary; the silence itself spoke volumes.

"Do you ever think about how far we've come?" Desny whispered, tracing lazy circles on Klaven's palm.

Klaven smiled, eyes softening. "Every day. It feels like we've lived a lifetime since we first met."

She nodded. "We've made so many mistakes... hurt each other... but here we are."

He leaned his forehead against hers. "Because love isn't perfect. It's messy, complicated... but it's worth every scar."

Their breaths mingled.

She tilted her head, lips brushing his. "I want to remember every moment — the good and the bad — because it made us this."

Klaven's hand slid to cup her face, thumb stroking her cheek. "You're my forever."

They stood, moving toward the kitchen, where they prepared dinner together. The playful banter returned — teasing glances, stolen kisses over chopping boards, laughter that filled the small space like music.

Later, they danced in the living room, the worn wooden floorboards creaking beneath their feet. The world outside faded away, leaving just the two of them, hearts beating in unison.

When they finally lay down, their bodies tangled beneath soft sheets, Desny whispered into the dark, “Promise me we’ll always fight for this.”

Klaven kissed her temple. “I promise.”

And as sleep claimed them, they dreamed of a future painted in love’s vibrant colors — imperfect, passionate, and true.

Chapter Twenty-Six: The Weight of Silence

The morning sun filtered softly through the curtains, casting gentle patterns on the walls of Klaven's apartment. Desny lay nestled against his chest, her fingers tracing the faint lines of a tattoo she had never seen before — a small, intricate design on his shoulder blade.

Klaven stirred, opening his eyes to find her watching him with quiet curiosity.

"That's new," she murmured.

He smiled, pulling her closer. "Got it last year. Thought I'd never tell you."

She traced the ink again, fingers lingering. "What does it mean?"

"Strength through struggle," he said. "A reminder to keep fighting — for myself, for us."

Desny kissed his collarbone. "I'm glad you did."

The day stretched ahead with unspoken thoughts between them. Neither wanted to break the fragile peace that had taken so long to build.

Yet, beneath the surface, secrets still lingered.

Klaven's phone buzzed with a message — from an unknown number.

Desny noticed his expression darken.

“Everything okay?” she asked softly.

He shook his head. “It’s just... the past trying to catch up.”

Desny reached for his hand. “We’ll face it together.”

That evening, they walked through the quiet streets of Nallia, the city’s glow casting long shadows.

They stopped at a bridge overlooking the river, the water shimmering under moonlight.

Klaven took a deep breath. “There are things I’ve never told you. Things I was ashamed of.”

Desny looked at him, eyes steady. “Tell me.”

He hesitated, then shared stories of mistakes, regrets, moments of weakness he thought would push her away.

Instead of judgment, she offered understanding — a balm to his wounded soul.

They stood together, letting the river’s flow carry away the weight of silence.

Back home, the night unfolded in a dance of vulnerability and passion. Each touch was a confession. Each kiss a pledge.

They bared not only their bodies, but their hearts.

And in that sacred space, silence became their strongest language.

Chapter Twenty-Seven: The Taste of Forever

The scent of rain lingered in the air as Desny stepped into Klaven's apartment, her hair damp and eyes bright with a restless kind of hope. The evening city lights flickered through the windows, casting soft shadows that danced around them.

Klaven was waiting, dressed casually, his smile warm and genuine — the kind that could melt away years of doubt.

"You're home early," she said, slipping off her coat.

"I couldn't wait," he replied, pulling her into a gentle embrace. "I needed to see you."

They settled on the couch, sharing a bottle of wine, fingers weaving together like the verses of a poem. Desny traced the curve of Klaven's jawline, memorizing every detail as if it were the first time.

Their conversation flowed — memories, dreams, whispered secrets carried on breathy laughter.

And then, without warning, Klaven cupped her face, his lips finding hers in a kiss that was both tender and fierce.

The night deepened, and clothes fell away like barriers between their souls. They moved together with a rhythm born of years apart and the fierce urgency of now.

Desny's skin tingled beneath Klaven's touch, every kiss a promise, every sigh a sacred vow.

He traced the line of her collarbone, his lips lingering as she shivered beneath him.

“I want to remember this,” he murmured. “Every moment.”

She looked into his eyes, shining with unshed tears. “Forever starts tonight.”

They made love slowly, deliberately, as if savoring the taste of forever on their tongues. Every caress was a word in a love letter written across skin.

They clung to each other, not wanting to let go — two hearts beating in perfect harmony beneath the starry night.

When the world fell silent, they lay entwined, breaths mingling, the warmth of their bodies a refuge from everything else.

As dawn crept in, Desny whispered, “This is home.”

Klaven smiled, brushing a strand of hair from her face. “And I’m never leaving.”

Chapter Twenty-Eight: The Dance of Two Souls

The night wrapped around Kaken City like a velvet cloak, stars shimmering faintly beyond the city lights. Desny stood by the window, the breeze teasing strands of hair across her face, heart pounding in sync with the distant rhythm of music floating up from the street below.

Klaven entered quietly, his presence steady and warm behind her.

“You look like you’re waiting for something,” he said softly.

She smiled without turning. “Maybe I’m waiting for us.”

He stepped closer, the scent of sandalwood and cedar filling the space between them.

“Then let me show you,” he whispered.

He reached out, fingers curling around hers, guiding her to the center of the room. A playlist started—soft jazz, slow and hypnotic.

Their bodies moved together in a dance neither had rehearsed but both knew perfectly. Each step was a conversation, each touch a sentence.

Desny felt the world dissolve — the pain, the fear, the distance — replaced by the electricity that sparked when two souls finally found their rhythm.

Klaven's hands traced the curves of her waist, his breath warm against her ear.

"You're mine," he murmured.

She pressed closer, her lips brushing his neck. "Always."

Their dance became more urgent, hands exploring, bodies pressing closer until clothes fell away like petals.

On the hardwood floor, they moved together — slow, deliberate, worshipful.

Klaven kissed the lines of her collarbone, lips tracing every inch with reverence.

Desny's fingers tangled in his hair, pulling him closer, anchoring herself in the present.

Every sigh, every gasp, every whispered name was an unspoken promise — a vow that they would never let go again.

Afterward, wrapped in each other's arms, Desny whispered, "This is where I belong."

Klaven kissed her forehead. "And I'll never let you go."

Outside, the city continued its endless hum, but inside that room, time stood still — a sanctuary built on love, trust, and the dance of two souls finally home.

Chapter Twenty-Nine: The Breaking of Dawn

The first light of dawn filtered through the sheer curtains, casting a soft glow over the room where Desny and Klaven lay tangled beneath the sheets. Their breaths were slow, synchronized in the quiet aftermath of the night's passion.

Desny's fingers traced lazy patterns on Klaven's chest, feeling the steady beat of his heart beneath her skin.

"I never want this to end," she whispered, voice thick with sleep and emotion.

Klaven smiled, brushing a stray lock of hair from her face. "It won't. Not if I can help it."

They lay there for a long moment, wrapped in a cocoon of warmth and promises

Outside, the city was waking, but inside, time felt suspended — a fragile bubble they refused to burst.

Desny shifted, curling into Klaven's side. "I'm scared sometimes," she admitted. "Scared that life will pull us apart again."

He tightened his arms around her. "We've been through storms. We've been torn and rebuilt. That's what makes us strong."

She closed her eyes, drawing comfort from his words.

Later, they walked hand in hand through a quiet park, the air crisp and scented with blooming jasmine.

Klaven stopped and pulled her close, eyes searching hers.

“There’s something I want to say,” he began, voice low and steady.

Desny’s heart fluttered.

“I want to build a life with you — a real life. Not just stolen moments or fleeting nights.”

She smiled, tears threatening to spill.

“Me too,” she said simply.

They spent the rest of the day dreaming aloud — planning a future filled with laughter, art, and love.

And as the sun set, painting the sky in hues of pink and gold, Desny knew that this time, love wasn’t just a memory.

It was their destiny.

Chapter Thirty: Recalls of Forever

The evening air was thick with the scent of blooming night jasmines as Desny and Klaven stepped into the quiet garden behind her apartment. The soft glow of lanterns flickered through the branches, casting delicate shadows that danced like memories across the ground.

Tonight was different.

Tonight was the night everything they'd fought for — the love, the pain, the second chances — would find its forever.

They stood beneath the largest tree, its limbs sprawling wide like open arms, a symbol of the growth they'd nurtured together.

Klaven took Desny's hands in his, his gaze steady, unwavering.

"Desny," he began, voice trembling slightly. "There were days I thought I'd lost you forever. Days I wondered if love was just a cruel joke. But standing here with you now, I know it's real. It's everything."

Tears welled in Desny's eyes.

"I love you," he continued, dropping to one knee.

Her breath caught, heart pounding in her chest.

"Will you marry me? Will you let me be the one you come home to, the one who holds your heart forever?"

Desny's hands flew to her mouth, tears streaming freely.

"Yes," she whispered, voice breaking. "Yes, a thousand times yes."

He slipped the ring onto her finger — simple, elegant, perfect — and pulled her into a fierce embrace.

They spent the night wrapped in each other's arms, words no longer needed. Their love was a quiet flame burning steady and strong, promising forever.

In the weeks that followed, preparations began. Friends and family gathered, old wounds healed, and new memories blossomed.

On their wedding day, under that same sprawling tree, Desny and Klaven vowed to cherish every moment — the laughter, the tears, the storms, and the sunshine.

They sealed their promises with a kiss, sweet and eternal.

As they danced beneath the stars, Desny whispered, "We are home."

Klaven smiled, pulling her close. "Always."

And in that moment, surrounded by love and light, their souls sang the song of *recalling it ever* — a love remembered, lived, and never forgotten.

The End

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Nallia	A vibrant town known for its historic streets and flower markets; setting of many pivotal scenes.
Straiden University	The prestigious university where much of the story's drama unfolds.
Masee Town	A coastal town famous for its arts community and jazz culture.
Kaken City	A bustling metropolis representing ambition, nightlife, and conflict.
Desny	The novel's protagonist — a passionate and talented artist.
Klaven	Desny's love interest — a complex, fiercely loyal man with a turbulent past.
Natty	A mysterious character whose arrival shakes the lives of the main characters.
Julie	Desny's supportive and outspoken roommate.
Joan	The law professor who holds many secrets.
Victor	A powerful and enigmatic figure tied to several plot twists.

Author's Word to the Readers

Dear Reader,

Writing this novel has been a journey of rediscovery — of emotions, places, and people who live not only in my imagination but in the hearts of many. I hope *Recalling It Ever* touches something deep within you, reminding you that love is messy, beautiful, and worth every risk. Thank you for inviting these characters into your world. May their story stay with you long after the last page.

Warmly,

Kusasira Julian Kush