

Chapter 39

Chapter 39 reflects a time when life felt controlled, but I still tried to hold on to some semblance of my old self. Before the conservatorship, I was spontaneous and free-spirited. My friend Cade would suggest a road trip, and I'd be packed and ready before he even finished telling me the destination. I had confidence in my choices, whether it was adjusting the sound at my shows or expressing frustration when things went wrong. I didn't hold back—everyone knew how I felt, and I embraced that freedom. But in Vegas, everything changed. I went through the motions, performing the same show over and over, like a robot, with no voice or autonomy. Smiling and nodding became my only option. The feeling of being reduced to just a performer, without a say in the matter, wore on me, and I longed for more freedom.

The only thing that kept me going during this period was the promise of two vacations with my kids every year. This tradition meant everything to me, as it allowed me to reconnect with them and recharge. However, when Glory was released, I was forced to tour instead, which meant no vacation. I had to bring my kids along on the road, and it wasn't fun for anyone. It was exhausting and frustrating, especially since I was unable to enjoy the one thing I needed for my well-being. So, the following year, I made it clear to my team that I needed those vacations. I wasn't asking for a break, I was demanding it. I flagged them down in the quick-change area before a show and told them, "I really need those vacations this year." I explained how important these trips were for my mental health, and that Maui had become a sanctuary for me and my kids. It was our tradition, and it was something I deeply relied on to maintain my peace of mind.

My team, understanding the importance of this to me, agreed to let me have the summer off after finishing two tour shows. I felt a sense of relief knowing that we were on the same page. The deal was set—once Vegas was over, I would be able to take a

break with my children. However, as December 2017 approached and my Vegas residency was finally coming to an end, I was hit with unexpected news. I had completed hundreds of shows and was eager to be done with it all. But as I was changing in my dressing room between acts, someone from my team dropped the bombshell: I was expected to go on tour again that summer. This was not what had been agreed upon, and I felt betrayed. "That wasn't the deal," I said, frustrated. I had already made plans, and I had made it clear that I was taking my kids to Maui. It wasn't just a vacation—it was an essential part of my mental health. Yet, it seemed that my needs were being overlooked once again. This marked a moment when I realized that, despite my efforts to assert myself, I was still bound by decisions made by others.

This experience highlights the constant battle between my personal needs and the demands placed on me. I was caught in a cycle where my voice was often disregarded, and the pressure to perform never ceased. Despite this, I continued to advocate for myself, even when it seemed like I was being ignored. The contradiction between my desire for a break and the ongoing demands of my career left me feeling exhausted and defeated. The holidays and vacations were supposed to be a chance to restore balance in my life, but instead, they became just another source of stress. I was constantly giving, but rarely receiving the space I needed to heal. The promise of those vacations was one of the few things that kept me grounded during the chaos of my career.