

Chapter 37

Chapter 37 marks a shift in my journey as a performer, where I began to grapple with the restrictions placed on me and the way I expressed myself on stage. For so long, I had been told that my hair, my movement, and my performance were key to my appeal. The energy of a performance was supposed to be reflected in how I moved, how I danced, and how freely I let my hair fly. But during my Las Vegas residency, I found myself wearing tight wigs, dancing in a way that kept my hair still, and doing everything I could to avoid the very thing that was expected of me. I wanted to rebel, even if only in my own mind, and by withholding the exuberance I was known for, I was punishing not just the people controlling me, but also my fans. I realized now that I had been sleepwalking through much of the past thirteen years, and it was the trauma of being controlled that made me withdraw from the energy I once brought to the stage.

I was trapped in a conservatorship that stripped away the freedom I once had as an artist. Freedom—true freedom—is what defines an artist. It's not just the music or the performance but the ability to create from a place of genuine passion, to express oneself without constraints. Under the conservatorship, I wasn't allowed to truly be who I was or to explore my full potential. But things began to change when I started promoting *Glory*. With the release of the singles, my passion started to reignite, and I found myself connecting more deeply with my performances. I began to wear high heels again, something I hadn't done in years, and I started to feel like the star I had always been meant to be. It was during this time that I truly felt the audiences lifting me up again, feeding off the energy I was putting out. My performances became less about following orders and more about reconnecting with the joy I had once felt.

As I gained more confidence, I began to recognize the power of being in front of an audience again. There's a unique kind of connection between a performer and their

audience that is difficult to describe to anyone who hasn't experienced it. The best way I can explain it is that it's like electricity—this current that flows from you into the crowd and back again, creating a loop of energy and emotion. For a long time, I had been on autopilot, moving through my performances without feeling the energy of the crowd. But slowly, I started to believe in my abilities again. I had kept this growing belief a secret, even from myself, but now it was starting to feel real. As I found a sense of personal freedom again, I started dreaming of a future where I could return to being the artist I always knew I could be. The idea of starting a family with Hesam, and imagining a future that was free from my family's control, began to feel like a possibility. I had spent **so many** years under the weight of the conservatorship, but now it seemed like the barriers could finally come down.

Looking back, I realize how overwhelming the conservatorship was. At the beginning, I was consumed with doctor appointments—doctors constantly visiting, and my life was dictated by their schedules. Despite this constant medical oversight, I was still denied the basic autonomy to make my own decisions, like being unable to get my IUD removed when I asked. The conservatorship had its physical security measures, with guards everywhere, but it had a devastating impact on my mental and emotional well-being. The lack of control over my own life made me feel trapped in a bubble, safe in one sense, but isolated in every other way. The very structure that was supposed to protect me had stripped away my ability to feel joy, creativity, and connection with myself.