

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 was the beginning of a chilling winter in my life, both literally and emotionally, even under the California sun. Los Angeles, with its endless blue skies and palm trees, usually doesn't feel seasonal. But in January 2008, everything around me seemed cold and distant, not because of the weather—but because I felt deeply alone. While others sipped iced drinks and strolled in flip-flops, I was dealing with a breakdown that landed me in the hospital. My behavior had become erratic. I was on a lot of Adderall, and I'll admit, I wasn't my best self. I was angry—furious about how things had gone with Kevin, after I'd poured everything into our relationship. He left, and I was left picking up the emotional wreckage with no real support. That rage bled into everything I did and every choice I made.

During that time, I started dating a paparazzo, which might sound reckless, but in that moment, he felt like the only person who understood me. He treated me with kindness, helped me get through crowds, and never flinched when things got chaotic. People thought he was using me—and maybe he was—but back then, I saw a man who stood up for me when others didn't. He was ten years older and full of bravado, and I found comfort in how fiercely he encouraged me to be myself. Being with him gave me the illusion of freedom. I was wild and loud, and I acted out in ways that shouted how fed up I was with being judged, handled, and cornered. I didn't hold back; whether I was laughing too loudly at restaurants or lying across tables in defiance of what was expected of me, I was done playing nice. The media saw chaos, but underneath that, I was a woman trying desperately to reclaim power in a world that kept stripping it from her.

Despite how destructive it all may have looked, those moments with the photographer felt freeing. He didn't shame me for being rebellious. He supported it. After feeling constantly criticized by my parents, especially my father, this man's acceptance felt

radical. He didn't yell at me for partying or acting out—he cheered me on. For the first time in a long while, someone wasn't trying to mold me into what they thought I should be. I went from being chased by cameras to being followed by someone who, at least for a time, made me feel seen. One reckless night, I did a 360 turn near a cliff, and somehow we didn't crash. We both knew we could've died, but instead of fear, I felt intensely alive. That moment encapsulated what I was chasing: something real, something wild, something that reminded me I still had a pulse.

Eventually, I learned the photographer had been married the whole time—something I didn't know until after we split. Still, our time together had served a purpose. He helped me survive some of my darkest moments. I was sad. I missed my kids constantly, and my family didn't offer the comfort I needed. My relationship with the photographer was flawed and impulsive, but it helped me through my depression. He gave me the attention I was aching for and told me I was okay just as I was, no strings attached. And for someone who'd always been expected to be perfect, that meant everything. But as our relationship intensified, I started sensing that my family wanted to intervene again—and not in a helpful way.

That's when things took a disturbing turn. My mom called me out of the blue and said there were rumors that the police were after me, which was false. I hadn't broken any laws. I'd had my moments—I was high on Adderall and living in extremes—but I wasn't a criminal. Still, I was invited to a beach house under the pretense of having a talk. It all felt suspicious. When my boyfriend showed up, helicopters began circling above, and suddenly a SWAT team descended on the property. I was shocked and terrified. I kept yelling that I hadn't done anything. But the storm had already been set in motion, and I was powerless to stop it.

Later, I came to believe that this ambush wasn't spontaneous. Around that time, my father had grown close to Lou Taylor, a businesswoman he began to admire obsessively. Lou was just starting her company, Tri Star Sports & Entertainment Group, and she became instrumental in executing the conservatorship. She had few clients then, but using my name and success, she was able to build her entire business. The

timing of the second hospital stay and the legal maneuvering around the conservatorship felt too calculated to be coincidental. Lou and my father worked together to put me under a double conservatorship: one that gave him control over my finances and another that gave him control over my person. That meant he could dictate where I lived, what I ate, who I could talk to, and whether I could even drive a car. Despite my pleas, the court still gave him the authority, choosing a man with a history of alcoholism and emotional abuse to oversee my life.

The justification given was that I was no longer capable of caring for myself. But that wasn't true. I had just completed one of the most successful albums of my career. I was still working, still showing up, still making millions for the people around me. I later discovered that my father paid himself a higher salary than I received, pulling in over \$6 million during the conservatorship. Others close to him also profited heavily. This wasn't about protection—it was about control and money. Conservatorships are meant for individuals who are incapacitated, unable to function or make decisions. But I was functioning. And yet, I was treated like a child, robbed of every basic freedom. The setup could have been temporary—many conservatorships are—but they had no intention of letting go. They built an empire on my back and didn't want it to end. My father's control over both my personal life and my career was a legal straitjacket I couldn't escape.

No matter how chaotic I may have appeared on the surface, the truth was much more complicated. I was not perfect. I was messy, emotional, and at times impulsive. But I was human. And I didn't deserve to have my entire life taken from me under the guise of care. What started as a painful breakup and a cry for help spiraled into a legal nightmare, where my freedom became a currency exchanged by people I should've been able to trust.