EXCLUSIVE

BONUS Epilogue

FOR

Vows of Vengeance

SOME PROMISES
ARE MADE
TO BE BROKEN.
OTHERS ARE MADE
TO GET EVEN.

ALISON REID

Exclusive Bonus Epilogue

Vows of Vengeance

by Alison Reid

Twenty Years Later…

The soft glow of evening filtered through the bedroom windows, turning the city skyline beyond to gold and amber. Angela stood before the mirror fastening a delicate earring when the bedroom door opened behind her.

She smiled automatically at Lincoln's reflection. Twenty years later, the sight of him could still unsettle her heartbeat.

Time had touched him lightly. Silver threaded the dark hair at his temples now, lending him an even more dangerous elegance, but nothing had diminished the force of him. He still carried that same controlled power, that same devastating presence that could command a boardroom with a glance. Only now there was warmth beneath it when he looked at her—warmth few people in the world ever saw.

And tonight, his grey eyes were unreadable.

"What is that look?" she asked softly.

Lincoln didn't answer immediately. Instead, he crossed the room toward her carrying a large white box tied with satin ribbon.

"For you," he said quietly.

Angela blinked in surprise. "Lincoln… we already agreed no extravagant gifts."

One dark brow lifted slightly. "I agreed to no such thing."

Her laugh escaped before she could stop it. Some things never changed. He set the box carefully on the bed, then stepped back, watching her with an intensity that made her pulse flutter.

"Open it."

Angela untied the ribbon slowly, curiosity growing. The moment she lifted the lid, her breath caught. Folded inside lay a breathtaking white gown. Not ivory. Not cream. White.

Her fingertips trembled as she touched the silk. The fabric spilled like water beneath her hand, luminous and impossibly soft. Elegant rather than elaborate, it was fitted through the waist before flowing into graceful layers that looked as though they would float when she walked.

Nestled atop the gown was a diamond necklace. Not a pendant. An entire river of diamonds.

The stones caught the light in brilliant flashes, wrapping in an intricate design delicate enough to appear almost weightless while still radiating unmistakable luxury. It looked less like jewellery and more like captured starlight.

Angela stared speechlessly.

"Lincoln…"

His gaze remained fixed on her face. "Put it on tonight."

"For dinner?" she asked faintly.

"For me."

The way he said it made warmth rise slowly through her chest. After twenty years, he could still do that to her with two simple words.

She lifted the necklace carefully. "This must have cost a fortune."

"It's our anniversary."

"That has never stopped you from terrifying jewellers."

A faint smile tugged at his mouth.

"I terrified one into opening his private vault."

Angela shook her head softly, overwhelmed, emotional without entirely understanding why. "It's too much."

"No," Lincoln said quietly, stepping closer. "Nothing involving you has ever been too much."

Her eyes lifted to his then, and for a moment the years seemed to dissolve between them. She saw flashes of the man who had once stood beside a boat looking at her as though she were something fragile and miraculous. Only now his love no longer frightened her. It steadied her.

His fingers brushed her cheek gently.

"Wear the dress, Angela."

She swallowed. "You're being strangely mysterious."

"That's because I learned long ago surprises are the only way to get anything past you."

"Should I be worried?"

His mouth curved slowly. "Terrified."

* * * * * * * *

An hour later, Angela descended the staircase and found Lincoln waiting below.

He looked up. And simply stopped breathing. The white silk skimmed her body perfectly, elegant and timeless. Her dark hair fell in soft waves over her shoulders, and the diamond necklace blazed against her skin. She looked impossibly beautiful—so beautiful that for one dangerous heartbeat Lincoln

was struck by the same sensation he'd experienced the first time he'd ever truly seen her.

Mine.

Angela smiled nervously beneath the force of his gaze. "Well?"

Lincoln crossed the foyer slowly, unable to take his eyes off her.

"God," he said roughly.

A blush touched her cheeks, even after all these years.

"You're staring."

"I'm trying to remember how I survived twenty years looking at you."

She laughed softly, and the sound hit him somewhere deep in the chest. Still his weakness. Still his peace. When he reached her, he lifted one hand and lightly touched the diamonds at her throat.

"Perfect."

"You spoil me."

"Yes."

"At least you admit it."

"I've earned the right."

Her eyes sparkled with amusement. "Have you?"

His expression shifted then, becoming quieter. Deeper.

"I spent over twenty years loving you," he said softly. "I'd say that qualifies."

Emotion tightened her throat unexpectedly. Even now, Lincoln rarely spoke words like that aloud. When he did, they mattered. Before she could respond, the front door opened and William strode inside.

At nineteen, their eldest son was almost painfully like his father—tall, dark-haired, broad-shouldered, carrying the same dangerous composure that made strangers instinctively move aside. But where Lincoln had once worn coldness

like armour, William possessed an easier warmth inherited entirely from Angela. He stopped short when he saw her.

"Wow."

Angela laughed. "That bad?"

"You look incredible, Mum."

Lincoln's eyes narrowed slightly. "Careful."

William grinned immediately. "Relax, Dad. I'm not competing with you."

"Smart decision."

Another voice echoed from the hallway.

"You started without us?"

Andrew appeared next, seventeen and leaner than his brother, his charm brighter, his smile quicker. Behind him came Serena, fifteen and beautiful enough already to make Lincoln quietly dread her future.

Serena gasped dramatically the instant she saw Angela.

"Mum!"

She rushed forward. "You look like a princess."

Angela smiled as her daughter hugged her tightly. "That's sweet."

"No seriously," Serena insisted, stepping back. "Dad's going to cry."

Lincoln gave his daughter a cool look. "I do not cry."

William snorted. "You cried when Serena got a fever last year."

"That was different."

"You threatened the doctor," Andrew added helpfully.

"He was incompetent."

Angela burst into laughter, and Lincoln watched her helplessly, feeling the same thing he had felt for two decades whenever his family surrounded her.

Gratitude.

Raw and staggering.

He still couldn't comprehend how close he had come to losing it all. Five long years consumed by vengeance, hatred, and pride—years spent believing revenge would heal the emptiness inside him.

Instead, it had nearly destroyed the only thing that ever truly mattered. And somehow… despite everything he had done, despite every scar he had left behind, life had still given him this.

A wife who looked at him after twenty years with the same fierce, unwavering love. Three children who carried pieces of both their hearts. A home filled with laughter instead of silence.

A life so far beyond anything he deserved that even now it humbled him.

"Ready?" he asked quietly.

Angela slipped her hand into his. "For dinner? Yes."

Lincoln's gaze lingered on her a moment longer.

Not dinner, he thought.

Forever.

* * * * * * * *

The car eventually slowed before a small stone chapel glowing softly beneath the night sky.

Angela frowned instantly.

"Lincoln…"

He smiled faintly. "Surprise."

Confusion flickered across Angela's face as Lincoln opened her door and helped her from the car.

"Lincoln…" she began softly, glancing toward the small stone chapel glowing beneath the evening sky.

Music drifted through the warm air, gentle and romantic, carried on the breeze like a whispered memory. Then the chapel doors opened. Angela froze. Everyone they loved was inside waiting. Friends. Family. Familiar smiling faces turned toward her all at once, warmth and affection shining in their eyes. Candles flickered softly along the aisle, bathing the chapel in golden light, while white roses overflowed from crystal vases, their delicate fragrance filling the air.

At the altar stood William beside Lincoln's oldest friend, tall and devastatingly handsome in a black tuxedo, looking so much like his father it stole Angela's breath for a moment. Serena stood nearby glowing in pale silver silk, clutching a bouquet of white roses, her dark hair falling in soft curls around her shoulders. And beside her stood Andrew, hands clasped before him, smiling in that quiet, gentle way that had undone Angela from the moment he was born.

Her hand flew to her mouth.

"Oh my God…"

Emotion crashed through her so suddenly she could barely breathe. Lincoln turned toward her slowly. The candlelight caught the silver at his temples, the strength in his face softened by something infinitely more powerful than the ruthless ambition he had once lived for.

Love.

Only love.

He reached for both her hands, holding them carefully as though they were the most precious thing he had ever touched. And perhaps they were.

"Sweetheart," he said softly, his deep voice thick with emotion, "light of my existence… this is our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary."

Angela's eyes filled instantly.

"I wasted five years of that marriage with my stubbornness… my pride… and my need for vengeance." His mouth tightened briefly with regret before his thumb brushed gently across her knuckles. "But the last twenty years have been the greatest gift of my life."

His gaze flickered briefly toward their children before returning to her.

"You gave me a family when I deserved nothing. You gave me love when I barely understood what it was." His voice roughened dangerously. "And somehow, after everything, you still look at me like I'm the man you fell in love with."

A tear slipped down Angela's cheek. Lincoln's expression softened completely.

"I want you to know something, Angela." His eyes locked onto hers with devastating intensity. "My love for you has only grown stronger with every passing year. Every morning I wake beside you, I love you more than I did the day before."

A shaky breath left her.

Then, slowly, without taking his eyes from hers, Lincoln lowered himself onto one knee. The entire chapel fell silent. William smiled faintly. Serena burst into tears instantly. Andrew looked suspiciously emotional himself. Lincoln held Angela's trembling hands in his and said quietly,

"So, I need to ask you something."

His voice gentled into something almost unbearably tender.

"Will you marry me… again?"

Angela stared down at him through a blur of tears. At the man who had once married her with vengeance burning in his heart. The man who had nearly destroyed them both before learning how to love. The man who now stood

before God, their children, and everyone they loved with nothing in his eyes but devotion.

Her heart felt too full for her chest.

"Lincoln…" she whispered brokenly. Then she laughed softly through her tears and nodded. "Of course I will."

* * * * * * * *

Ten minutes later, Lincoln stood waiting at the altar beside William.

The soft candlelight bathed the small chapel in gold, flickering against the polished wood pews and white roses that lined the aisle. Beyond the stained-glass windows, dusk had deepened into velvet blue, but inside everything glowed with warmth, love, and quiet anticipation.

Lincoln barely noticed any of it. His eyes were fixed on the chapel doors.

William glanced sideways at his father and smiled faintly. "You look nervous."

Lincoln exhaled a quiet laugh without taking his eyes off the entrance. "I am."

It startled William slightly. His father feared nothing. Boardrooms, rivals, crises—Lincoln Spokes moved through all of them with cold confidence and absolute control.

But this?

This mattered.

William had grown up watching a kind of love most people only talked about. He had seen friends dragged between two houses after bitter divorces. Watched classmates pretend they did not care when their fathers disappeared or their mothers cried behind closed doors. He had watched relationships fall

apart so easily around him that, for a while, he assumed that was simply how life worked.

But never his parents.

Lincoln and Angela had never wavered.

Not through the hard years. Not through the fights, the pressure, the chaos that came with building a life together. Somehow, every year, they only seemed more in love than the last.

Even now, after all this time, his father still looked at the entrance like the world stopped turning whenever his wife walked into a room.

And God, William hoped that one day he would find a love like that too. Something unshakable. Certain. The kind of love that survived every version of life and still came out stronger.

"She'll come," William murmured.

Lincoln's mouth curved softly, calm now in a way only one person in the world could make him. "I know."

The music changed then, gentle and emotional, filling the chapel with aching beauty. Every guest turned toward the aisle. Serena appeared first.

Lincoln's chest tightened instantly at the sight of his daughter. She moved gracefully beneath the candlelight, silver silk shimmering softly around her as she carried a bouquet of white roses. Her expression was radiant but emotional, tears already glistening in her eyes as she walked toward the altar.

Halfway down the aisle she glanced toward Lincoln and smiled shakily.

And suddenly he saw not the poised young woman before him, but the tiny little girl who used to climb into his lap wearing plastic tiaras and declare herself a princess.

God.

He swallowed hard. Then the chapel doors opened fully once more.

Silence fell.

Angela stood there with Andrew beside her. For one suspended heartbeat Lincoln forgot how to breathe. She was breathtaking.

The white silk gown flowed around her like moonlight, elegant and timeless, the diamond necklace blazing against her skin. Her dark hair framed her beautiful face in soft waves, and emotion shimmered in her green eyes as they locked onto his.

Twenty-five years. And she could still bring him to his knees with a single look. Andrew smiled gently at his mother before hooking her arm through his.

"You ready?" he whispered.

Angela's trembling laugh reached Lincoln even from the altar.

"No."

Andrew grinned. "Good. Dad looks terrified too."

A ripple of laughter moved softly through the chapel as the music swelled around them. Then Andrew began walking her down the aisle. Lincoln watched every step. Watched the woman who had transformed his entire existence move toward him once again.

Memories crashed through him with painful clarity—the first time he had seen her kneeling on the office floor surrounded by scattered files… the first time he had kissed her… the years he had almost destroyed through vengeance and pride… the life they had rebuilt together piece by piece.

And through all of it, Angela had remained the centre of him. His home. His peace. His redemption.

By the time she reached him, Lincoln's chest felt unbearably tight. Andrew kissed Angela's cheek tenderly before placing her hand into Lincoln's.

"Take care of her," he said quietly.

Lincoln's eyes never left Angela's.

"Always."

Andrew stepped back beside Serena while Lincoln slowly lifted Angela's hand to his lips.

"You're so beautiful," he whispered roughly.

Angela laughed softly through her tears. "You already said that."

"I needed to say it again."

The minister smiled warmly before beginning.

"Twenty-five years ago, two people stood before God and promised to love one another through all things—through joy and hardship, failure and forgiveness."

Lincoln's fingers tightened gently around Angela's.

"And today, surrounded by the family and life they built together, they stand here once more—not because they have to… but because love has endured."

Angela's eyes filled again. The minister turned toward Lincoln first.

"Lincoln, do you take Angela once again as your wife, to honour and cherish her for all the days of your life?"

Lincoln never looked away from her.

"With everything I am," he said quietly. "I do."

Emotion rippled visibly through the chapel. The minister smiled before turning to Angela.

"And Angela, do you take Lincoln once again as your husband?"

Her lips trembled into a smile so full of love it nearly undid him.

"Always," she whispered. "I do."

William handed Lincoln the ring box. Inside rested a new wedding band—platinum lined with diamonds. Lincoln slid it slowly onto Angela's finger beside

the original ring she had never removed. His voice dropped low enough that only she could hear.

"Twenty-five years," he murmured. "And you still own my heart completely."

A tear slipped down her cheek.

"You've always owned mine too."

The minister's voice softened warmly.

"Then by the love you have shared, the life you have built, and the promises renewed here tonight… it is my honour to pronounce you husband and wife once more."

Lincoln didn't wait. His hands framed Angela's face as he kissed her deeply and tenderly beneath the candlelight while applause and laughter filled the chapel around them.

And for the first time in his life, Lincoln Spokes understood completely what it meant to be blessed.

— The End —

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