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Rico's Revenge

Sherri L Carroll

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by Sherri L Carroll

Genre: Romantic Theiller

Key Takeaways

• Surviving violence is only the beginning of recovery: Skye’s healing involves nightmares, physical pain, fear, and reclaiming a sense of control over her body and home.

• Love cannot replace a survivor’s agency. Rico learns that trying to protect Skye by withholding medical or investigative information repeats the loss of control she is already struggling with.

• Trauma is not overcome by pretending to be fine. Supportive friends and family help Skye by listening, respecting boundaries, and letting her choose when to rest, talk, or seek help.

• Grief over fertility and the future deserves room, even when survival seems like the more urgent concern. Skye must be allowed to mourn what surgery may have changed without being hurried toward reassurance.

• Revenge promises certainty but risks turning Rico into the person he wants to punish. His decision to involve law enforcement instead of ordering violence is a meaningful choice toward justice and a future with Skye.

• Trust is built through honesty and accountability, not grand promises. Rico, Skye, Ellis, and Bastile each have to acknowledge harm, disclose what they know, and accept that forgiveness cannot be demanded.

• Community support can matter as much as individual courage. Phillip, Elaine, Martha, Ellis, Nadège, and even former enemies contribute practical care and help Skye regain

connection and choice.

• Identity and love exist within social realities: Skye and Rico confront the racial and cultural assumptions others may bring to their relationship rather than pretending those pressures do not exist.

• Recovery is nonlinear and personal. Skye returns to work gradually, considers changing careers, seeks medical answers, and makes plans for marriage while still living with uncertainty and fear.

Who Should Read This Book

Rico's Revenge will appeal to readers who enjoy romantic suspense centered on a committed couple navigating danger, grief, and the difficult work of rebuilding trust. It is especially suited to readers interested in survivor-led recovery, close friendships and family bonds, interracial relationships, and characters whose past mistakes remain consequential. Skye's efforts to reclaim control of her medical care, home, work, and future give the story a strong emotional focus beyond the kidnapping plot. Readers looking for a fast thriller with little attention to aftermath may find the extended recovery and relationship conversations more prominent than the action. In contrast to romance-suspense stories that treat love as a cure or revenge as straightforward justice, this book emphasizes communication, boundaries, and legal accountability—while leaving some questions deliberately open for the next installment. It is best read after Book One in the Bleu Series, since Rico and Skye's relationship and several conflicts draw on events from the earlier book.

Chapter Summaries

Prologue

Skye returns to the apartment where Dennis shot her, determined not to let the attack dictate when she can come home. Rico has checked the locks and wants to move her to his place, but Skye insists that returning on her own terms is part of healing. They agree that he will stay with her, even as the balcony door recalls the shooting and an unfamiliar noise outside makes them both tense. That night, Skye falls asleep with the lights on while Rico keeps watch. He cannot promise Dennis will not return, and his resolve to find him grows. Before morning, Skye wakes screaming, showing that the danger has passed from the room but not yet from her mind.

Chapter 1

Three weeks after coming home, Skye is still plagued by nightmares, poor appetite, and exhaustion. Rico tries to give her medication prescribed for sleep and anxiety, but she refuses, unwilling to take mind-altering drugs. Their argument exposes both his fear for her health and his tendency to push solutions instead of asking what she needs. After Skye throws the pill and cries, Rico recognizes that proximity does not mean he understands her. He apologizes for trying to put medication in her hand without first talking to her. Skye says they are both learning, and Rico stays nearby without insisting she take the prescription.

Chapter 2

Rico asks Zane for updates on Dennis, whose cash withdrawal in Jackson County suggests he may be using another account. With little progress through ordinary channels, Rico decides to contact Bastile, a former enemy whose history with him is painful. He asks for a meeting because finding Dennis and protecting Skye now outweigh his reluctance to reopen that relationship. The chapter also shows Rico's exhaustion and his habit of carrying burdens alone. He checks on Skye through the glass, worries over her recovery, and speaks with his daughter Kattiana, who challenges him to admit that he cannot manage everything by himself. He does not tell her about the meeting, foreshadowing the secrecy that will deepen the strain between him and Skye.

Chapter 3

Skye wakes to breakfast prepared by Phillip, her longtime best friend, who has returned to help while Rico handles an appointment. Phillip refuses to treat her like an invalid: he calls her out for ignoring messages and taking her anger out on people who care about her, while still offering food, jokes, and companionship. His straightforward support helps Skye eat and admit that she is frightened by memories of Dennis and the shooting. Phillip suggests that the apartment itself may be making recovery harder and encourages Skye to ask about ending her lease. On the balcony, Skye faces the place where she was attacked and manages to stay outside for an hour. Phillip does not demand that she feel brave or healed; he gives her room to stop when she needs to and helps her reconnect with ordinary humor and conversation.

Chapter 4

Skye overhears Phillip discussing her with Elaine and learns that her loved ones have not told her the full extent of the damage caused by the bullet. When Rico arrives, she hides that she heard the call, but her questions and guarded behavior make clear that she suspects a secret. Rico and Phillip step onto the balcony to discuss what she should be told. Left alone, Skye finds her discharge papers and begins reading the medical information she has avoided. She wants the truth directly, rather than a version filtered through other people's fears about what she can handle. When the men return, neither notices that she has placed the papers where they might see them, reinforcing how easily their protective intentions can prevent them from

listening to her.

Chapter 5

Rico confronts Phillip about Skye overhearing the conversation, but Phillip argues that Skye is entitled to move freely in her own home without encountering secrets about her health. He says her family's delay is likely to make her feel betrayed. Rico admits that seeing Skye shot and nearly die has changed how he sees her strength, and that he has been trying to shield her from more pain. The men agree that Skye deserves the truth, even though Rico fears what it will mean to her. Phillip reminds him that Skye previously suffered a miscarriage and had hoped she might have another chance at motherhood. Rico understands that the news cannot be delivered as a reassurance or a decision about her future; they must explain what the surgeon did and let Skye decide what it means.

Chapter 6

Rico and Phillip tell Skye that the bullet caused more damage than she realized. When they explain that the surgeon repaired her intestine, removed her gallbladder, and removed one ovary, she fears she will never be able to have a child, remembering her earlier miscarriage and difficulty becoming pregnant. Rico and Phillip comfort her, but Phillip's familiar teasing also helps her reconnect with their old friendship. After the first wave of grief, Skye demands the medical records and asks for an appointment where the doctor will answer her questions directly. She tells Rico and Phillip that being afraid does not give them the right to decide when she learns about her own body. They apologize, and she takes time alone to read the report before arranging a follow-up, a small but important step toward regaining control.

Chapter 7

Skye asks Rico why he did not wake her and where he went. He gives a vague answer about errands, then erupts with the fear he has been holding: he watched her get shot, feared she would die in surgery, and feels guilty that he could not protect her. His confession explains his distance, but his vow that Dennis will pay alarms Skye, who fears what Rico might do when he finds him. Skye asks Rico not to make her pretend that revenge cannot cost her the person she loves. He says he will talk to her before acting, but cannot convincingly promise that he will keep that commitment. The chapter makes clear that Rico's anger is not simply about Dennis; it is also bound up with guilt and helplessness, and those feelings threaten the trust he wants to preserve.

Chapter 8

Skye apologizes for questioning Rico and worries that he might leave her because she has become a mess. He reassures her that he loves her and that parenthood does not have to follow one specific path, but she is not ready to be comforted by the idea that everything will work out. She needs room to grieve the possibility that her body and future may have

changed. Later, she prepares questions for her medical follow-up and asks Rico whether he would be sad if they never had a child together. He answers honestly, allowing that he might feel sadness without measuring their life by a medical outcome. Skye explains that part of her grief is losing the chance to decide later. They agree not to force a decision before she has more information or time to understand what she wants.

Chapter 9

Skye wakes to find Rico and Phillip making breakfast. She tells them she took one of the prescribed pills after the difficult conversation of the previous day, surprising them and demonstrating that accepting help can be her choice. Rico makes her fresh juice with ingredients associated with his family's home remedies, and Skye thanks him for caring for her. Rico avoids explaining where he is going, and Skye notices. She writes questions for her medical appointment, determined not to let fear keep her from asking about her surgery and recovery. Rather than immediately investigate Rico behind his back, she decides she will ask him directly when he returns. Her recovery is beginning to include both practical self-advocacy and clearer expectations for their relationship.

Chapter 10

Phillip asks Rico what he is hiding and rules out an affair before Rico admits he is trying to find Dennis. Rico says he wants Skye safe and is keeping the search separate from her recovery, but Phillip warns that secrecy is not a sustainable way to protect her. Rico maintains that he wants to bring Dennis in, though he acknowledges he cannot predict how he will feel when he finds him. Rico's visit to Mrs. Garrison for a grocery delivery gives the chapter a counterpoint to his secret pursuit: his service to elderly neighbors reflects the life he is trying to build outside his violent past. Mrs. Garrison advises him to help his friend in a way she can appreciate later. Phillip, meanwhile, refuses to be made part of a lie and urges Rico to tell Skye the truth himself.

Chapter 11

Skye watches Rico prepare to leave and notices the gap between his loving words and his evasiveness. She feels guilty that he has set aside his work and care for others while helping her, but Rico insists that staying with her is his choice. Once he is gone, Skye asks Phillip what Rico has told him. Phillip admits that Rico is looking for Dennis but refuses to provide details he does not know or to become a go-between. Skye is angry and worried, aware that Rico's search could become dangerous, yet she recognizes that she has to ask Rico for the rest. Phillip keeps her company with a movie while she waits, offering support without pretending he can resolve the conflict for her.

Chapter 12

Rico meets Bastile at a park, where Bastile offers information about Dennis and acknowledges that Rico acted honorably by not blaming him for Skye's shooting. The file reveals that Dennis is actually Daniel Liberiani, a former inmate convicted of attempted murder who served as a hired hitman. Rico suspects Dennis may have been working for Blake, though the documents do not establish who ordered the attack. Bastile offers to have someone kill Dennis, but Rico refuses to choose that course yet. He takes the file and sends its contents to Zane for verification, promising not to confront anyone before the information is checked. Before they part, Rico challenges Bastile to do more than speak of changing: if he wants to make amends for their past, he should eventually tell the truth on the record.

Chapter 13

While Skye and Phillip watch a true-crime documentary, Skye receives a call from her mother. Martha worries that Skye is moving too quickly with Rico and raises the challenges of their different racial and cultural backgrounds. Skye initially hears prejudice in the concern, but Phillip explains that Martha is afraid of the discrimination and hostility Skye may face as a white woman with a Black partner. Phillip tells Skye about an incident in which Martha defended him from racist harassment and called him her son. Skye apologizes to her mother, and the conversation opens into a more honest discussion about how race affects their lives without defining their relationship. Rico and Skye continue that conversation privately, discussing how they can recognize social realities and tell each other when one of them misses something.

Chapter 14

Rico, overwhelmed by the danger surrounding Skye and by her mother's concerns, decides she would be better off returning to her family. Phillip sees through the excuse and demands to know why Rico is pushing her away. Their argument becomes physical before Skye interrupts them and asks Rico to look at her and say he does not love her. Rico cannot answer. He packs a bag, leaves, and tells Skye she should go home with Phillip, breaking her heart. Alone in his car, he recognizes that he could turn back and tell her the truth, but chooses to follow a new lead in the Keys instead. He calls Skye but hangs up without leaving a message, convinced that distance will protect her even as his actions damage their trust.

Chapter 15

Skye lies in bed devastated by Rico's departure while Phillip urges her to leave Miami for a few days. She refuses until Corporal Ellis arrives. In their conversation, Skye asks about Dennis and learns that the authorities know he used aliases but have no clear motive. Ellis reveals that investigators saw Rico meeting Bastile and speculates that Rico may have returned to gang activity or even arranged the shooting. Skye angrily rejects the accusation and orders Ellis and Phillip to leave, unwilling to accept a theory as fact. She rushes outside, hurt and physically unsteady, and calls Rico to tell him she believes in him and loves him. She

does not make it to safety before a car arrives nearby, setting up the danger that has been closing in while she and Rico both act without telling one another where they are.

Chapter 16

In Islamorada, Rico listens to Skye's voicemail and learns from Phillip that she has disappeared. Ellis had suggested Rico might be involved in gang activity because of his meeting with Bastile; Skye left the building upset, and no one has been able to reach her. Rico asks Phillip to keep her family calm at first, repeating the same instinct to manage information that has already caused trouble between them. Rico contacts Bastile, who brings in associates to trace Dennis's phones and movements. Their information suggests Dennis may be near the Keys, and they discover he served time alongside Jay Norrington, the man who killed Skye's father. Rico recognizes that this may explain why Skye was targeted, though it does not prove Jay ordered the attack. He finally calls Skye's family and admits she is missing, promising not to keep them in the dark again.

Chapter 17

As the search intensifies, Rico asks Phillip for Blake's number, even though Blake betrayed Skye through his affair and has little reason to be trusted. Rico calls him because he needs someone with access to Jay Norrington. Blake reveals that he has left the police force after the affair and pregnancy became public, and agrees to visit Jay and find out what he knows. Blake reports that Jay denied knowing Dennis before admitting they were cellmates. Jay said he paid Dennis to kill Skye and dispose of her in the ocean, but Rico refuses to treat the claim as proof that Skye is dead. He coordinates with Bastile's people and tells Phillip he should have been honest with the family sooner. The search shifts toward finding Skye alive and bringing authorities into the effort.

Chapter 18

Dennis approaches Skye outside her apartment and shows her a photograph of Rico with Bastile, using it to exploit her suspicions. When she tries to go inside, Dennis threatens the people around her, knocks her phone away, and forces her into his car. Skye struggles and calls for help, but he strikes her and stuffs her into the trunk. At a remote fishing hut, Dennis reveals that Jay Norrington sent him to erase Skye's father's legacy and says Jay told him to kill her. Dennis also makes clear that his own intentions are more dangerous than a simple murder-for-hire. Despite her injuries, Skye observes his habits and surroundings, leaves marks with her name, and looks for evidence that could help someone find her. She prays, remembers her father's advice about giving a witness something concrete, and refuses to stop thinking of ways to survive.

Chapter 19

Bascom’s team traces another phone and computer connection to a remote inlet where Dennis may be hiding. At the same time, Blake tells Rico that Jay admitted to hiring Dennis to kill Skye. The news hardens Rico’s anger, but he continues toward the location rather than accepting Jay’s account as the full story. Rico insists they move carefully, using a drone to check the terrain and planning for an airboat rather than rushing blindly into a marsh. The group finds signs that Dennis has moved on, and Rico worries they may be too late. The chapter emphasizes the tension between urgent rescue and reckless action: Rico must control his desire to confront Dennis so that finding Skye remains the priority.

Chapter 20

Dennis prepares to move Skye from the hut. She insists on water and a bathroom before going, using her resistance to buy time and secure what little control she can. While washing her bloodied face, she prays for help and speaks to Rico in her mind, asking him to hear her and find her. Dennis takes her by boat toward Haiti, intending to sell her there. Shackled inside the vessel, Skye struggles with pain, dehydration, and the fear that Rico will not reach her. She tracks changes in speed, saves water, tears a strip from her shirt as a possible signal, and keeps searching for opportunities to leave evidence. Even when she cannot escape, she makes small choices that keep her from surrendering psychologically.

Chapter 21

Rico and Bastile’s group reaches the hut after hearing a boat engine depart. Inside, Rico finds blood on the floor and pillow and Skye’s hair, and is overwhelmed by the possibility of what Dennis has done to her. Bastile urges him to search for clues rather than lose time to grief. The men find Skye’s scratched marks and a computer trail showing that Dennis is heading to Haiti. Rico recognizes her evidence as a message that she had been there and was alive when she left. He sends the clues to Ellis and joins the group heading out by airboat, now more committed to coordinating with law enforcement rather than keeping the search within Bastile’s circle.

Chapter 22

Dennis reaches Port-de-Paix and moves Skye from the boat to a hut near a village. Injured, exhausted, and still under threat, Skye sees that other people are close enough to hear her. She watches the settlement and plans how to get help without causing Dennis to retaliate against a stranger. Skye writes her name and Dennis’s information on a medical wrapper and pushes it through a crack in the window. She also uses the pencil from a first-aid kit to leave her name and the date beneath the cot. These small acts let her preserve information and make contact possible, while her conversations with Dennis reveal that his conflict with Jay over money and instructions may create an opening.

Chapter 23

Rico and his companions prepare to cross the water toward Haiti. Bascom insists they take adequate fuel and supplies rather than rush into a dangerous crossing, and Sharpie explains that the boat's heading is not a confirmed location. Rico wants to move immediately but recognizes that an unplanned arrival could make the search more dangerous. Rico finally calls Ellis with the vessel details, likely landing area, and information about Skye's disappearance. Ellis arranges to contact authorities in Haiti and tells Rico that Skye's family now knows she is missing. Rico accepts responsibility for having delayed the truth and agrees not to ask anyone to lie again. The journey begins with a more deliberate partnership between the searchers and law enforcement.

Chapter 24

In the Haitian hut, Skye hears Dennis argue with Jay about money and where to take her next. When Nadège, a local woman carrying a basket, passes the window, Skye asks for help and gives her full name, Dennis's name, and the fact that he is armed. Nadège listens and leaves without drawing attention to herself, giving Skye a chance to hope that authorities may be contacted. Skye continues to leave evidence and to watch Dennis's movements. She writes identifying details on a medical wrapper and pushes it outside, and she challenges him about the number of people who may have seen him moving her. Her strategy does not free her immediately, but it makes him hesitate and keeps the possibility of rescue alive. She distinguishes his choices from her own, refusing to blame herself for his kidnapping.

Chapter 25

During the crossing, Rico receives word from Ellis that a local resident has reported a woman held near Port-de-Paix. Authorities are moving to check the location, and Ellis warns Rico not to approach alone or interfere with local officers. Rico learns to wait and coordinate, even though every minute feels unbearable. At the harbor, Rico gives the officers Skye's photograph and medical information. They confirm that a resident saw her and brought in the wrapper bearing her name. Rico recognizes that Skye has reached help through her own actions. Bascom reminds him that the next useful choice matters more than regretting the earlier ones, and Rico waits for updates as officers position themselves around the hut.

Chapter 26

Dennis tries to move Skye from the hut just as authorities are nearby. Skye sees Nadège and other people outside, then stalls Dennis by emphasizing her injury. When a phone rings and distracts him, she drops her weight, strikes his gun arm, and rolls away as the officers enter and take control of him. Outside, Skye thanks Nadège for calling for help. She learns that Nadège had believed her and reported what she saw, and she gives a clear account of her identity and injuries to the medic. Skye is frightened and exhausted, but she recognizes that she helped create the chance for the officers to separate her from Dennis rather than merely waiting to be rescued.

Chapter 27

Rico receives Skye's call from the clinic and rushes to her. Their reunion is emotional: he apologizes for not reaching her sooner, while she tells him she knew he would come. Doctors examine her injuries and confirm that her earlier surgical wound has been strained but not torn again. Skye and Rico discuss how she was found, Rico's alliance with Bastile, and his threatening words about Jay. Rico admits he wanted revenge but says he called Ellis instead of acting on it. They agree that neither should try to manage danger by withholding information. Skye asks for practical support, including control over medical decisions and privacy when she needs it; Rico offers to stay without taking over.

Chapter 28

Skye gives a careful statement about her kidnapping, separating what she remembers from what she only suspects. Nadège visits and brings oranges, and Skye thanks her for believing her. Bastile also visits; Skye acknowledges that his help matters without pretending it erases his past wrongdoing. Skye reunites by phone with her mother, sister, and Phillip, and begins to cope with nightmares and the aftereffects of captivity. She asks for a break when she needs one, plans to write Nadège a letter, and records details while they are still clear. Rico supports her through ordinary meals and conversation instead of insisting that the danger or the trauma is already over.

Chapter 29

Skye and Rico return to Miami after her doctors clear her for travel. Ellis apologizes for treating a theory about Rico as though it were established fact, and Skye acknowledges that she should have contacted him sooner. The investigation into Jay remains open, with Rossi explaining that evidence—not assumptions or a suspect's reputation—will determine what can be proved. Back at Skye's apartment, she decides she does not want to keep living in the bedroom where she was shot. Rico supports her choice, and her family helps her move toward a new home. The chapter emphasizes the difference between telling Skye she is safe and giving her the authority to decide what surroundings help her feel safe.

Chapter 30

Bastile comes to Rico and Skye's new home to say that he has given investigators a statement admitting his role in the old case that sent Rico to prison. Rico does not treat the confession as forgiveness or as an automatic resolution, but he recognizes that it puts the truth where it belongs. Skye responds cautiously, noting that the legal meaning of the statement must still be determined. Bastile meets Elaine, Skye's sister, who makes clear that an apology is not enough to earn trust. Their conversation carries a guarded warmth, but Elaine does not mistake his confession for proof that his life has changed. The chapter begins a tentative connection between them while keeping accountability and the consequences of Bastile's past in view.

Chapter 31

Skye continues with medical appointments and counseling, gradually learning to live with nightmares and reminders of the kidnapping. She and Rico rent a new place with a courtyard and a bedroom that suits her needs. Their relationship changes as Rico learns to respect her request for space, while Skye recognizes that he too is dealing with fear and nightmares. Rico learns more about Bastile's statement and consults his lawyer about what parts of his old conviction may be revisited. He admits that he did break the law while questioning what Bastile falsely attributed to him. Skye helps organize the records, and Rico calls Kattiana to speak honestly about the past and the possibility—rather than certainty—of correcting it.

Chapter 32

After Skye completes her first short week back at work, she tells Rico that the job still matters to her but that walking into the station and coming home can both be difficult. She wants to recognize hardship without surrendering the ability to decide what happens next. When she tells him she misses physical closeness, Rico checks that she feels medically ready and lets her guide the pace. They make love with care, communicating about pain and comfort as Skye reconnects with her body on her own terms. The scene is not presented as a cure for trauma, but as an experience she chooses and shares. Afterward, they talk about work, fear, and what each of them needs, showing intimacy as a continuation of their effort to listen rather than a substitute for it.

Chapter 33

Months pass as legal proceedings against Dennis and the inquiry into Jay continue. Blake apologizes to Skye, but she accepts his words without reopening a relationship that is already over. Meanwhile, Rico enjoys time with Kattiana and his grandson, allowing family life to grow alongside unresolved legal questions. After a family dinner, Rico asks Skye to marry him. He makes the proposal when he can accept that she may answer freely, not as a way to calm his own fear. Skye says yes, wanting a future they choose together. Their engagement is hopeful without suggesting that the criminal case is finished or that a wedding can erase what they have survived.

Chapter 34

Rico and Skye begin discussing their wedding while agreeing not to rush a date or let legal proceedings dictate every part of their lives. They make a list of the people they want with them, including family and close friends. The planning is an ordinary, shared activity that reflects how they are building a future rather than simply reacting to danger. Skye remains uncertain about whether she will continue as a police officer. Rico reminds her that she was a full person before her career, while respecting that the work has been important to her. Their conversation leaves the decision open, giving her time to understand what she wants instead of treating either staying or leaving as proof of strength.

Chapter 35

Skye receives formal documents about the case against Jay and is asked to take part in another interview, including identifying Dennis's voice on a recording. She is relieved that the case is moving but afraid that a mistake could weaken it. Rico reminds her that she does not carry the case alone, while also telling her about his own efforts to revisit the record of his conviction. Skye listens to the recording, pauses when she needs to, and identifies Dennis's voice without claiming she can identify the speaker on the other end. Bastile also offers old records to investigators through legal channels. The chapter makes evidence and careful testimony central to accountability, while wedding arrangements continue alongside the case rather than waiting for every uncertainty to disappear.

Chapter 36

Skye takes a short interview assignment with a frightened woman who may be experiencing abuse. She finds that her professional skills and compassion are still present, but the work leaves her exhausted and a smell of gasoline brings back memories of the boat. Ellis encourages her to honor her scheduled hours rather than prove she can take on everything. Skye records her symptoms, speaks with her doctor and counselor, and considers whether the badge still fits her life. She recognizes that a meaningful moment at work does not require her to ignore the cost of returning. With the wedding approaching, she begins to see that her career, recovery, and future can be considered separately and at her own pace.

Chapter 37

Elaine accompanies Skye and Martha to choose a wedding dress and cake. Skye selects a dress that lets her move comfortably and feels like herself. Bastile joins the cake tasting after Elaine invites him, and he answers the family's questions about his history without asking them to trust him simply because he helped find Skye. Elaine's attraction to Bastile becomes harder to dismiss, though she remains wary of his past and does not promise him a future. She tells him to ask about her own life rather than treating her as an extension of Skye's family. Later, she responds to one of his messages while continuing to prioritize her sister's wedding and the family's needs.

Chapter 38

Five weeks before the wedding, Skye speaks with Rossi about the strain of returning to work and the way doors and other reminders can bring her back to the hut. She has not decided whether to leave law enforcement and has a medical appointment scheduled to investigate fatigue and nausea. At a pharmacy, she buys a pregnancy test, aware that surgery and stress can affect her cycle but unwilling to avoid the question indefinitely. At home, Rico tells her that Bastile's records may help investigators establish what Jay arranged before the attack. Skye is both glad and angry that the evidence exists. She asks for time alone, takes the test into the bathroom, and closes the door without yet revealing the result. The chapter ends on

uncertainty: the answer may affect how Skye imagines her future, but it will not decide her worth, career, or relationship.

Epilogue

On the night before the wedding, Elaine and Skye argue about Elaine's growing feelings for Bastile. Skye worries that he remains involved with gang associates and fears her sister is mistaking crisis-driven good deeds for lasting change. Elaine insists she knows the risks and wants the freedom to decide what the relationship means, while Skye admits that her objection comes from love and fear rather than a wish to control her. The sisters do not fully resolve the conflict, but they reaffirm their commitment to tell each other the truth and be present at the wedding. After Skye goes to bed, Elaine reads Bastile's message saying there is more she needs to know about the night's events. The story closes with the wedding imminent and Elaine facing an unresolved choice about hearing his full story or walking away.

Notable Quotes

> *"“I'm tired, Rico. I'm not helpless.”"*

> *"“You can be afraid with me. You don't get to make a medical decision for me because you're afraid.”"*

> *"“I need to be allowed to grieve what happened.”"*

> *"“I want a future we get to choose together.”"*

> *"“You don't have to decide which part of this I can handle.”"*

> *"“Sometimes the danger is real anyway.”"*

Full Summary

When Skye returns to her apartment, Rico follows with her hospital bag, careful not to crowd her as she makes her way inside. He has checked the new lock and the balcony door, but she insists she is tired, not helpless. The bedroom has been cleaned and the bedding replaced, yet the sliding door remains a reminder of the night Dennis shot her. Skye refuses Rico's offer to take her somewhere else. If she leaves because of Dennis, she says, she will not know when she is ready to come back. She takes Rico's hand and accepts that he will stay, but later falls asleep with the lights on. A sound from outside makes them both go still. Before morning, Skye wakes screaming.

Three weeks after coming home, the nightmares are still frequent. Rico tries to wake her and soothe her, then offers a pill prescribed by her doctor for sleep and anxiety. Skye throws it

away, reminding him that she has refused mind-altering drugs. Rico, frightened by her exhaustion, poor appetite, and weight loss, argues that she cannot heal if she never sleeps. Their concern turns into anger: he calls her stubborn in Haitian Creole, and she throws her water glass at the wall. Later, calmer, Rico admits he should not have put the pill in her hand without first talking to her. Skye asks him to stop watching her as if she might break whenever he leaves the room. He says he does not yet know how. “Then we’re both learning,” she tells him.

Rico is also trying to find Dennis. His associate Zane has found little beyond a cash withdrawal in Jackson County and a possible vehicle sighting. Rico asks Zane to arrange a meeting with Bastile, an old enemy he never wanted to approach again. He believes Bastile may help find Dennis, but keeps his plan from Skye and does not contact her partner, Ellis, about the lead. Even his daughter Kattiana notices that Rico is trying to manage everything alone. She offers groceries and questions whether he can keep handling it all; he admits he is working on recognizing his limits sooner.

The next day, Skye wakes to the smell of bacon and discovers her best friend Phillip in the kitchen. Rico has arranged for him to stay with her while he goes out. Phillip’s familiar teasing and bluntness draw Skye into breakfast: he tells her to stop taking her anger out on people who love her and to follow her doctors’ advice. Skye concedes that the shooting has been difficult, then admits she is scared. She sees Rico’s frightened face when she closes her eyes and Dennis everywhere she looks. Phillip listens, suggests that the apartment itself may be making recovery harder, and lets her consider the possibility of moving without insisting she do it.

Skye also confesses that she feels she failed everyone, especially her father. Phillip does not hurry her past the feeling. Instead, he tells her stories about home and gives her room to laugh and eat. On the balcony, she chooses the chair farthest from the bedroom door and tries to look at the view she once loved. The maintenance ledge still frightens her, but Phillip lets her decide when she has had enough. Skye says she once believed survivors when she told them fear would get smaller; believing it for herself is harder. Phillip does not demand that she feel brave. By staying outside for an hour on her own terms, she reclaims a little choice.

Later, Skye overhears Phillip discussing her health with Elaine. He says Rico has not told her the full extent of the damage from the bullet. Phillip and Rico take their conversation onto the balcony, thinking they are out of her hearing, while Skye sits with the knowledge that people she loves may be keeping something from her. She looks through her discharge papers and finds the medical summary difficult to face. When Rico and Phillip return, she acts as though nothing is wrong, but leaves the papers where they might notice them. They do not.

Outside, Rico confronts Phillip for talking about Skye’s medical situation as though she cannot hear it in her own home. Phillip says she has a right to know and that hiding the truth will only

make her angrier. He also reminds Rico that Skye once suffered a miscarriage and had hoped she might have a child someday. Rico has known that history but does not know how to tell her the surgery may have changed her prospects. He agrees to tell her what the surgeon said, without pretending he can decide what it means for her.

When Rico and Phillip finally try, Skye recognizes their hesitation and demands to know what they are hiding. She grows angry when they cannot speak plainly, telling them to leave. Rico explains that the bullet caused more damage than she understood: surgeons repaired a tear in her intestine, removed her gallbladder, and removed one ovary. He says she still has one, and that pregnancy may remain possible, but Skye fears that, after her earlier miscarriage and difficulty conceiving, motherhood may not be in the cards for her. Rico offers reassurance that a child can come into their lives in different ways. Skye is not ready for reassurance to erase her grief. Her loss deserves to be mourned even while she is grateful to have survived.

After they give her space, Skye rereads the medical summary and calls the surgeon's office herself to arrange an appointment. She asks for an explanation of the operation, her recovery, and her fertility, spoken directly to her. Rico and Phillip apologize for withholding the information; Skye tells Rico he cannot make decisions about when she hears medical news just because he is afraid. He accepts that he chose to delay the truth and says he is sorry. For a while, she sits alone with the papers. The situation has not improved, but asking her own questions leaves her feeling less powerless.

When Phillip leaves, Skye tells Rico she is overwhelmed but cannot bear to return to bed. He brings her to the couch, and she takes the remote from his hand before he can turn on the television. They sit quietly until she asks why he did not wake her and where he went while she was asleep. Rico admits he has been distant, then describes the terror and guilt he carries from watching Dennis shoot her and fearing she might die in surgery. He says he will make Dennis pay.

Skye hears more than a threat against Dennis: she fears what revenge could make Rico do. She tells him she is afraid of losing him as well as herself. Rico promises he will talk to her before he acts, but shame holds back the truth that he has already made plans in secret. The television stays dark, rain tapping at the balcony door as Skye asks for time.

Phillip had drawn Rico into Skye's true-crime marathon when Rico came home, but the tension in his jaw told her something was wrong. He brushed off her concern, claiming he was worried about a sick elderly man, and went to shower. Then Skye FaceTimed her mother. Martha urged her to come home, and questioned whether Skye and Rico had considered the strain their different backgrounds might bring. Skye heard race beneath the warning and snapped back, insisting that she was grown and would decide how to live her own life. Phillip helped her understand that Martha's fear came not from rejecting Rico, but from knowing how others might treat them. He described how Martha had once confronted men who harassed

him, calling him her son. Skye apologized, and the three spoke more honestly about the prejudice they might face instead of pretending it did not exist. Later, Skye and Rico talked about it together, making space for each to describe what they understood and what they might miss.

Rico, listening from the bedroom doorway, was unsettled by Martha’s worries and by the danger surrounding Skye. He began packing a duffel and urged Phillip to persuade her to return to her family. Phillip recognized that Rico was using Skye’s mother’s concerns as an excuse and demanded the truth. Rico insisted he was not good for Skye and would not explain further. When Skye came in and saw them arguing, Rico told her to go home with Phillip. She asked him to look her in the eye and say he did not love her. He could not. Instead, he left, asking Phillip to keep her safe. Rico told himself that disappearing would protect her, though her sobs followed him into the hall. A lead had drawn him toward the Keys, and he chose the hunt over the conversation Skye deserved.

Skye was left furious and heartbroken. Phillip stayed, refusing to let her shut him out, until she began messaging people again and Ellis arrived. When she asked about Dennis, Ellis admitted that police had discovered aliases and that surveillance had spotted Rico meeting Bastile. Skye was shocked; she knew their history and could not imagine Rico returning to gang life. Ellis raised the possibility anyway, even suggesting Rico might have arranged the attack for money or status. Skye ordered him out, unwilling to let suspicion stand in for evidence. She left too, overwhelmed and looking for a way to reach Rico.

By then, Rico had reached Islamorada, where he learned Dennis had recently been seen under another name. He listened to Skye’s voicemail, pleading with him to think of their future, and was struck by the distance his secrecy had created. Then Phillip called: Skye had disappeared after leaving the apartment. Rico’s fear surged, and he contacted Bastile, who sent him to a group of men with surveillance equipment. Their search revealed that Dennis had served time under his birth name, Daniel Liberiani, and had been a hired killer. More chillingly, Daniel had shared a prison cell with Jay Norrington, the man who killed Skye’s father. The connection did not prove Jay had ordered the shooting, but it gave Rico a reason to investigate. He asked for information that could help find Skye and even wrote down the address of a nearby clinic, thinking ahead to her medical needs.

When tracking suggested Daniel might be returning to the Keys, the men prepared to move. Rico called Ellis with their location, though he had delayed involving him before. A grainy camera image showed two people in a vehicle, but could not confirm Skye was among them. Rico refused to treat a guess as proof. He called Elaine too, admitting Skye was missing and apologizing for not telling the family sooner. Elaine’s anger did not keep her from helping; she wanted her sister found. The search was no longer something Rico could manage alone, and he began sharing information with those who could act.

Skye, meanwhile, had been taken from the street outside her building. Dennis had approached with a photograph of Rico meeting Bastile, using it to suggest Rico was hiding something. When Skye resisted, he threatened the people around her, struck her, and forced her into his car. She woke tied in the trunk, disoriented and in pain. At a remote fishing hut, Dennis revealed that Jay had sent him to erase Skye's father's legacy. He was erratic and frightening, but Skye watched carefully, noted what she could, and tried to stay alive. When he fell asleep, she marked a bottle with the letters of her name and left other clues behind. The marks were small, but making them was a choice: she was not simply waiting for rescue.

Rico's search closed in on a hut in the marsh. A second phone and attempts to access bank accounts helped the men narrow down Daniel's location. Blake, Skye's former husband, also called with news from a prison visit to Jay. Jay had denied knowing Daniel, then admitted the connection. Blake said he had struck Jay and learned that Jay had paid Daniel to kill Skye and dump her in the ocean. Rico refused to accept that Skye was dead; he held to the possibility that she was alive and still fighting. He also understood that revenge would be easy to imagine and impossible to undo. At the inlet, he told Bastile the goal was to bring Skye home and turn Dennis over, not add more blood to the story. He sent Ellis the location and let the search move toward law enforcement, though fear and rage still pressed him to act on his own.

As Rico's group approached the hut, an engine sounded in the distance. Inside, they found blood on the floor and pillow, evidence that Skye had been there, but no Skye. Her marked bottle and scratched name confirmed she had been alive and thinking clearly enough to leave signs. The men discovered that Daniel was heading for Haiti, intending to take her across the water. Rico set off after him, now with a destination but no certainty about what awaited them.

On the boat, Skye was cuffed beside a pantry, bruised, dehydrated, and in pain. Dennis told her he planned to take her to Haiti, where he could sell her. She prayed for Rico and for herself, but she did not surrender to helplessness. She rationed water, counted changes in the engine, and tried to gauge their direction. When the boat moved, she kept track of the turns and speed, knowing those details might matter later. Even trapped and frightened, she continued to make choices—small ones that kept her mind engaged and her hope alive.

Rico heard Skye's voice at the harbor and gripped the rail. She was alive; officers had caught Dennis, and a woman named Nadège had helped her. Skye was being taken to a clinic. Rico went there with the local officers' contact details, answered their questions, and waited until a nurse brought him to her. Her cheek was bloodied, her wrists swollen, and her earlier surgical wound needed checking. He held her only when she reached for him. Skye told him she had thought of him throughout the ordeal and knew he would come. He apologized for not finding her sooner; she reminded him that he was there now.

At the clinic, Rico told her how he had found her: Bastile and Zane helped trace Dennis, and Nadège alerted the authorities. Skye was surprised that Rico had trusted Bastile enough to cross the water with him. Rico explained that he had trusted him to help find Dennis, not with everything. More importantly, he admitted that he had hidden his meetings and plans from her, telling himself that secrecy would keep her safe. Skye acknowledged that she had left the building without telling Phillip where she was going, but refused to let them turn Dennis's kidnapping into a contest over who had failed whom. Dennis had chosen to take her; that was his responsibility.

Rico then confessed what he had not wanted to say: he had threatened Blake with what he might do to Jay, and Bastile had offered to arrange Dennis's death. Rico had wanted revenge, but had never given an order. Instead, he called Ellis and helped bring the authorities in. Skye was glad he had chosen that path. She needed him beside her, not lost to the violence he meant to punish. Rico understood that he could not promise to keep danger away; he could promise to tell her the truth. He also made clear that Ellis knew the details, including the threats he had made.

When Skye woke after a short, troubled sleep, Rico listened as she explained that she had also been thinking of him in the hut and on the boat. She had wanted to protect him from danger, just as he had tried to protect her by withholding information. They agreed that both of them needed room to make their own choices, and both needed to share what they knew. Skye asked Rico to sit with her while she ate, respect her privacy during a bandage change, and let her choose where they would live. She also wanted him to tell her when he was afraid. He agreed. They ate oranges together without pretending that the nightmare or the pain was already behind them.

At the clinic, Skye gave officers a careful account of Dennis's journey, threats, calls with Jay, and plan to sell her. She distinguished what she knew from what she could only infer. Nadège visited with oranges of her own. Skye thanked her for believing her and getting help; Nadège answered simply that Skye had given her a name and she had been able to do something. Bastile also came by. Skye recognized both his help in finding Dennis and her reasons for mistrusting him. Bastile promised to make a statement about the past, while Rico made clear that a promise would have to be followed by action. Skye called Elaine, Martha, and Phillip, letting each hear for herself that she was alive. When fear returned that night, she told Rico she could still see the trunk and asked him to sit with her. He did, without insisting that she be fine.

Back in Miami, Ellis apologized for speculating that Rico might have been involved in the shooting. He had treated a meeting with Bastile as evidence instead of asking what it meant. Skye accepted the apology but said he should have brought her the facts and asked questions. She also accepted her own responsibility to call for help when she knew something

was wrong. At the station, Rossi explained that Jay's involvement remained under investigation; Dennis's arrest did not by itself prove who had ordered the attack. Phone records, payments, and testimony would matter. Skye asked what could be independently verified and how the Haitian investigation would be coordinated.

The apartment still carried the memory of the shooting. Skye could not make herself enter the bedroom, and Rico did not demand that she prove she could. With help from family and friends, they moved to a home with a courtyard and a solid front door. Skye chose a bedroom facing the morning light and wrote down what she wanted in a home. Martha, Elaine, Phillip, and Rico gave practical help without taking the decisions out of her hands. Skye kept her father's photograph by the bed, now because she liked seeing him, not because she felt obligated to embody his legacy. She began appointments with doctors and a counselor, and Rico came when she asked. When she wanted time alone, he left without treating it as rejection.

Bastile eventually came to their home and told Rico and Skye that he had admitted to the investigators what he had done with the car and how he had let the old charges fall on Rico. His statement could not restore the years Rico lost, and lawyers still had to determine what it might establish, but it put part of the truth on record. Rico felt anger and relief together. He did not pretend that Bastile's confession erased their history.

As Skye gradually returned to work, she discovered that her badge still mattered to her, but it did not settle what she should do next. She took shorter shifts and paid attention to the difference between meaningful work and exhaustion. At home, she talked openly with Rico about fear and about wanting physical closeness again. She asked him to trust her about her own body; he did, and followed her pace. Their intimacy became a way for Skye to reclaim touch and desire on her own terms, with the freedom to speak up if something hurt. She could feel scarred and still feel beautiful, vulnerable and still in control.

Rico proposed after asking whether she wanted a future they could choose together. Skye said yes. Their engagement did not end the investigations or make recovery complete, and they agreed not to rush a wedding date. At breakfast the next morning, they wrote down the family and friends they wanted beside them. Skye still did not know whether she would remain a police officer; Rico reminded her that she had been herself before he knew her occupation. They ate pancakes, spoke about the life they wanted, and left the list open between them—a beginning with room for uncertainty, honesty, and choices still to come.

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