

Under the Harmony *- The Honeymoon* *Period Pt1*

Under the Harmony ends with an interview with Blake and Rose, where they talk about their wedding, honeymoon, and the scrutiny they faced afterwards when information about Hunter came to light. Here is an additional section from that time. This should be read after Under the Harmony.

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“Blake.”

If I’m sure of one thing in life, it’s that the sound of my wife’s voice is always going to make me smile.

“Yes, my sweet?”

“Are you sure about this?”

I look at Rose, stunned as always by her appearance. She is so beautiful.

Two weeks under the glorious sunshine has given her skin a healthy bronzed shade, visible even under the moonlight that shines above us. Her natural honey blonde hair has been lightened by the sun during our time away, looking like a glorious halo that frames her. Her blue eyes shine bright.

She looks like she should be on some runway, with a thousand cameras flashing around her as she headlines a show for the newest bikini lines from a famous designer. Or she would, if she weren't frowning, hands on her hips, staring at the water as if it were going to torture her.

"I'm sure, but you don't have to do it if you don't feel comfortable," I soothe.

"It's just... big."

I resist the urge to laugh at her choice of words. It takes less than a second for her to frown to disappear and she giggles.

God, I love the sound of her giggling.

"I promise I've got you. I've always got you, Rose," I coax.

"I know you do."

"It's no different to swimming in the pool."

"It is vastly different to swimming in the pool," she grumbles.

"If you don't want to do it, we'll go back to the villa."

I take a step towards her. She shakes her head. Squares her shoulders. Reaches out for my hand.

"We didn't get up in the middle of the night to swim in the ocean, just for me to chicken out at the last minute," she proclaims.

I squeeze her hand. We take a step closer to the water. Another. Another. Close enough that the next rush of the waves up the sand covers our feet.

“I told you it would be warm,” I point out. It would be warmer if we waited until lunch, but we fly home tomorrow morning, and I wouldn’t want to have risked her getting seen by anybody. We’ve been fortunate so far on our honeymoon. The only person we have seen since we got to this little island has been the maid who speaks little English, so suffers through my very broken Spanish as we make small conversations whenever she dropped off more food and supplies. Other than that, it has just been me and Rose. No radio. No TV. No internet. No newspapers. No phones. Just me, her, and the warm bliss that I swear surrounds me whenever we are together.

“Warm—ish,” Rose counters.

We take a couple more steps. When we’re waist deep, I stop.

“Ready?”

We’ve been swimming in the pool at the villa together every day. Rose has become more confident with her swimming as the days passed.

She nods and then sets off into a swim. She has slow strokes, so I catch up with her quickly. We swim side by side, parallel to the shoreline, heading in the direction of the villa. We’d walked some distance from the villa with the plan to swim back as far as Rose wanted. When we reach the section of the beach that leads up to our villa, Rose stops swimming. I watch as she tries to right herself and I realise that we’ve swum into deeper water—deeper than she can stand upright in.

I grab her before she can falter or panic. She doesn’t look frightened at the deeper water. Instead, she smiles and wraps her arms around me.

“Swimming with my husband in the Atlantic. One off my list,” she says.

“Aiming for all the oceans?” I ask, keeping us both upright in the water.

“All the oceans, the seas, the rivers, the lakes,” she declares.

“That’ll take us a lifetime.” I smile at her.

“Good job we plan to be together for a lifetime, then.” She smiles back at me.

“And in the next,” I promise.

I know Rose finds it amusing that I talk about a life after this one on Earth. Sometimes she’ll tease me and say it’s a change given I once claimed I was agonistic and have long proclaimed there was nothing after this. All those beliefs changed when I fell for her. It isn’t like I converted to a religion and am suddenly at church every week. It’s just that the way the world feels when I’m with Rose, the way everything in the universe seems to fade into a hum whenever we kiss or touch, how can it do anything but convince me that this is as destiny designed; that she is my soul mate, that our love has a power to exist beyond this lifetime. Whatever happens once our time on earth is done, all I know is that our souls will be together.

“I can’t believe we’re going home in a few hours,” she says with a sigh. Together, we swim towards the shore, starting to walk when the water gets shallower. We walk together up the sand towards the villa that has been our home and sanctuary for the last month.

“We could extend. We could go somewhere else before we go home. Where do you fancy? Europe? Asia? Somewhere hot, or cold? Anything you want,” I offer.

“You know I’d travel anywhere with you, Indiana, but I am excited to get home and look at the photographs from the wedding,” she reminds me.

Our appointment with the photographer is set for our first full day back in the UK. Rose keeps telling me she’s excited, but I swear she underestimates how excited I am. How can I not be excited to see if the photographer captured just how radiant she looked on our wedding day. I’m reminded of how she looked when she walked down

the aisle towards me. Her dress was a stunning design, and she looked sensational in it, but it was her radiant, contented smile that had stalled my heart and stunned the breath from my body.

I wonder if the photographer caught that, too—my awed expression, my astonishment that I'm the luckiest man in the world, one who was about to pledge in front of the world how much I love her, and how humble I am that she chooses to love me too.

I slide the door open to the villa and grab the towels that I left out before our walk. I wrap a towel around her and kiss her forehead.

"Fine then. Photographer appointment. Catch up with a few friends. Then what?"

"Christen the house over the weekend," she proclaims.

"All the new rooms?" I tease. "That's a lot of rooms, Rose."

"I have a lot of love to give my husband," she jokes. "Still have time before we go home, too."

"You don't want to sleep before the flight?" I ask. It was our original plan—a night swim, back to the villa for some sleep, grab the cases and head for our private flight home.

Rose steps away from me. She drops her towel. She keeps her gaze on me as she unties the strings of her bikini top.

"Take me to bed," Rose suggests. I don't need any further persuasion.

I pull her into my arms and kiss her deeply. She tastes of the sea, and she feels like home.

She will always be my home.

As we walk through the arrivals gate, I get a sense that something is about to change. The private flight had been smooth and quiet, with polite and professional staff who gave us small smiles and left us pretty much alone for the whole flight. Rose had slept against me, apparently exhausted after the late night swim and activities.

Rose apparently feels the unease too as she looks at me with a little frown on her face.

“What’s going on?” she whispers.

“I don’t know,” I admit. I can’t pinpoint the reason for the unease. I just feel it in the air. Something is about to happen. I know it.

The people around us stare at us, and it isn’t with the usual amusement at seeing two famous singers. The staff are professional, but I can sense they’re holding back, that there is something they wish they could say but can’t.

Once through border control, I take Rose’s hand. We each pull a suitcase behind us as we walk. All I want to do is get Rose into the car that Maeve has arranged for us and get us home. There’s something about the atmosphere that has me on edge. Maybe I’m just imagining it. We’ve had four weeks of silence and just a bubble of us. Maybe I’m just adjusting to the noise of other people and setting Rose on edge too.

As soon as we’re outside, any hope that I’m imagining things disappears. There are photographers waiting. Again, I realise this isn’t photographers trying to get pictures of us returning from our honeymoon.

Cameras are thrust into our faces. There is a frenzy of clicking and so much pandemonium.

I let go of Rose’s hand and shove my arm out, trying to create a barrier between Rose and the photographers.

The shouts of questions overlap.

“Blake, are you going to divorce?”

“Rose, how do you respond to Isla Greenway’s accusation that you were instrumental in the breakdown of her marriage to Hunter Greenway?”

“Blake, how do you respond about finding out about the affair?”

“Rose, do you feel guilty for destroying their marriage?”

“Blake, do you have a prenup?”

“Move out of their way.” This voice is far steelier, sterner. She may be short in stature, but she sounds like she means business. Maeve pushes herself between us and some of the photographers who have started to crowd around us. One shoves a camera into Rose’s face, but Maeve pushes his hand away and glares at him. “Back up, right now, otherwise you’ll never be able pick up a camera again when I’m through with you,” Maeve warns.

She hustles us in the direction she wants, towards a large black SUV, one with blacked out windows, one that promises to be our sanctuary from the hounds of photographers who are still snapping pictures. It takes everything in me not to grab each of their cameras and smash them to smithereens.

For the second time in my life, I feel the urge to smash in a couple of teeth, too.

Maeve practically shoves Rose into the back of the car, then gestures for me to get in too. She slams the door shut behind us. I hear the muffled sounds of her shouting at photographers again as she deals with the suitcases, putting them into the boot of the car before rushing around to the car and getting in herself.

“What the hell happened?” Rose gasps as the car speeds away, Maeve still shoving her seatbelt on.

“I’m so sorry, I tried my best to get in touch but when you two say you’re going off grid, you mean it.” Maeve sounds flustered.

“Maeve. What happened?” I repeat Rose’s question.

“Hunter Greenway and Isla split up. It’s been a whole big thing here. It broke in the papers last week. She apparently found out about multiple women, including you, Rose. The papers announced their divorce, then she gave an interview. She only named Rose.”

I reach for Rose’s hand and give it a squeeze. I know this is her worst nightmare. This is the start of what she has dreaded for a long time, the topic that has kept her up at night. I thought the risk was fading into the background, something that became less likely as the time passed. Rose has always feared that it’ll explode at some point, and I know how much this will be hurting her.

“Is it just the affair?” Rose whispers.

Maeve gives her a sympathetic smile. Not that Rose would see because her gaze is fixed on the floor. She’s always like this when the topic of Hunter comes up. It’s taken a long time for her to accept everything. For her to accept that it wasn’t something she *let* happen, to accept that it was something he did *to her*. It took her a very long time to be able to say the sentence: he assaulted me.

Still, despite the acceptance, I know she feels guilt and shame, and I wish for the millionth time that I could take this all away for her.

“Yes. Nothing about what he did to you, nor what happened afterwards,” Maeve confirms.

Her voice is steady, and she sounds sure, but I know how worried she is based on my years of working with her. I also know she’ll be furious about everything until things settle down. I don’t think I’ve seen her as apocalyptic as she was the day Rose told her everything that had happened with Hunter.

“We can handle this, Rose,” I murmur.

I don't *want* her to have to handle any of this, but I know we can. We're strong. *She's* strong. Much stronger than she ever gives herself credit for.

"Do you think reporters will be at the house?" Her voice is still only a whisper.

"They are. I'm sorry. You can come to ours, but they're there too, probably because they expect that'll be a place you go to," Maeve says. It's not surprising. Maeve is my PA. Libby, her wife, is Rose's stylist. We've spent time with them, staying at their home. "Libby's been keeping them as far away from the property, so you'd be more than welcome. I know Libby would love to see you." Maeve fills the silence in the car.

"What do you want to do?" I address Rose. Squeeze her hand. Rub my thumb across her hand.

"We'll go home. I don't want to disrupt Maeve and Libby," she replies.

Maeve leans forward and addresses the driver, confirming the address to drive to. I shift closer to Rose on the backseat. She rests her head against me.

"We'll sort this," I promise.

"I'm tired," she says.

She doesn't say anything else. She just nestles further against me. I can feel her shiver slightly against me. It's the height of summer and warm in the car, but it's like she's in a frozen wasteland. I rub my hand up and down on her arm, trying to warm her up with some friction.

Maeve gives me a sympathetic look and then leans over to the driver again. I hear her asking for the heat to be turned up in the back. It takes a while, but Rose stops shaking. She stays silent against me, wrapped in my arms. Although she doesn't make a sound the whole journey home, I feel my tee shirt getting damp from her tears.

As the car finally pulls near home, I spot the photographers. Some are scattered out on the main street, before the gates that open to the main estate. I'm grateful for the gates because it should mean there isn't anybody near the house, not unless one of them is dumb enough to trespass. I know the house is close enough to the main road that a photographer with a long lens can still take some photographs of us, but it'll be better than a camera being shoved back in her face.

The gates mean the driver has to stop, waiting for them to open. The few photographers that are close by run towards the car. For a sickening second, there is nothing but flashes against the window until the gates are open for the driver to take us through.

I look out of the rear window, but it doesn't appear that anybody has followed through the gates.

The driver pulls up in front of our house.

"Wait here," Maeve instructs. She gets out of the car, looking around. She walks towards our front door, unlocking it with her key. She returns back to the car, getting the cases from the boot of the car, taking them into the house. Then she returns to the car, looking around again. She opens the door and I get out. I stand opposite Maeve, almost like a silent agreement between us that Rose will step into the middle of us, and we'll shield her. If there are photographers around, they can get a picture of Maeve and me. No way will I let them get their pound of flesh from Rose, be given a photograph of her crying.

We make it into the house without incident. I walk with Rose into the living room. It's towards the back of the house. One of the things we loved about the house was that the rooms at the front of the property are rooms we don't use often – the library, the office, a cloakroom. The rooms at the back of the property—the living room, kitchen, dining room, rooms we use more frequently—overlook the

gardens, the pool and the small recording studio, the tall trees that form the borders, and behind that is wide open space of private land that is owned by us and the other homeowners in the estate.

“Is there anything we can do about the articles?” I ask.

Maeve shakes her head. “Unfortunately not. There are too many outlets running them. They’re mostly reporting what Isla has said in her interviews, as well as posting pictures of you two that have already been published. It’ll take a while, but it’ll die down. You’re just going to have to ride this out.”

“Thanks, Maeve.”

“Right, well, I stocked the fridge for you, and the cupboards. You won’t need to go out for anything for a while, but that doesn’t mean you have to hide away. Neither of you do. Walk around with your head held high,” she advises.

Rose clears her throat. “Thank you for everything Maeve. Please tell Libby I’ll call her tomorrow.”

“I’ll leave you to it. If you need anything, either of you, just call.”

I give Maeve a quick kiss on the cheek and then she walks back to the front door where the car is still waiting to take her home.

I cross the living room to where Rose is standing. Her face is streaked with tears. I kiss along her cheeks. Less than twenty-four hours ago, I was kissing her sea-salt skin. Now, she tastes salty from the tears, but she still smells and feels like home.

“I love you,” I whisper.

“I love you too. Can we lie down?” she asks.

“Here or upstairs?” I ask. We have a large sofa in here, deep enough for us both to lie together on it, as we regularly do when watching her cheesy disaster films.

“Upstairs,” she says.

I walk her to the back of the house, to the staircase that leads upstairs. We walk hand in hand, slower steps than usual. We walk into the bedroom. I draw the curtains, banishing the light. She flicks on one of the lamps, the one on her bedside table, giving a little glow in the room. She strips out of her clothes, shedding her summer dress she was wearing for the journey home. She kicks off her canvas shoes before pulling the covers back and climbing onto the bed.

I strip down to my underwear, shedding the tear-soaked tee shirt and the black jeans she'd teased me about this morning given I spent most of our holiday either wearing swimming trunks or shorts. She always amused when I'm not in my usual jeans.

I get into the bed next to her. I kiss her forehead. She shuffles closer to me and snuggles against my chest. She lets her fingers trace across the dragon tattoo on my arm and chest.

I know words about Hunter will upset her. Planning, strategizing, soothing or calling him names will come later. For now, she wants something to soothe her. So I start to sing to her, a love song with lyrics I've been playing around with when she's been asleep by the poolside, words about how much I love her, and the wonderful future I know we'll have together.

I sing until she's asleep, her fingers still on my dragon tattoo, but no more tears on her cheeks.

I wake up alone in the bed. It isn't the first time since we got back from our honeymoon that I've woken up to an empty bed. It's been a week since we returned home, and I know exactly where Rose will be.

I throw the covers back. I get out of bed and walk down the stairs to the dining room. Like every night since we got back, Rose is sitting at the dining room table, an array of papers in front of her. It's articles she's printed from the computer, magazines she's had delivered, newspapers she's requested. Article after article about us, especially about her. The headlines she's printed from the web are awful, and I know they're from the questionable sites she's tormented herself with for days.

"Rose," I chide, as gently as possible.

"It's all so bad," she whispers. "Apparently, you've abandoned me and our marriage and sent me divorce papers."

I know the articles are bad. There have been headlines and articles, discussing whether we signed a prenup, speculating how much a divorce will cost us, wondering who of us will lose the most money. Given Rose has been an artist much longer than me, articles talk about how much money I'll walk away with. They call her a fool for not signing a prenup, that her losing her money would be penance for cheating. There have been articles suggesting I've consulted a lawyer. Headlines calling her a homewrecker and a heartbreaker. Gossip sites not holding back with the names they're willing to call my wife. Social media sites announcing that I'm heartbroken, broken, devastated and 'feel betrayed'. One site joked about how amazing our music will be when we're writing about our pain and betrayal.

One site wrote an article that, according to a source, we were seen having a blazing row in the street. It's all fabricated nonsense, especially as we haven't even left the house since we got back.

I hate every single one of them. I hate that she's torturing herself about this. I hate that she won't let me tell the world to leave her alone.

Rose leans back in her seat and takes a deep breath.

I sweep all the papers from the table. The magazines and newspapers land with the thud. The papers she's printed float and flutter silently to the floor. I kneel on the floor next to her, pulling her hands into mine.

"I would *never* abandon you. There is not a single thing you could ever do that would see me walking out of that door and leaving you behind. Ever. I care about how this is affecting you, but no matter how much of the story the press digs up and reveal, I'm here, Red. Right here, next to you. Remember our vows. Remember what I promised. Nothing has changed. Nothing ever could change," I vow.

She meets my gaze.

"I love you," she whispers.

"You know how much I love to hear you say that, Rose."

"I do. I do love you."

"I love you, too. But, Rose... this isn't healthy. This has got to stop. You can't keep punishing yourself, reading these things and thinking they're true or that they could become true. We know the truth. We know what happened. We just need to ride through this storm, okay?"

She nods. "I'll stop."

"Come back to bed," I coax. She nods. We rise together. We leave the papers on the floor. I make a promise to myself that I'll come down before she does and I'll clear them away so she doesn't have to see them again.

We go back up to bed and climb in together. She's asleep quickly, in her usual position, nestled against my chest, hand on my tattoo. I'm wide awake. I kiss her forehead and roll her onto her pillow. I love holding Rose as she sleeps, but tonight, I need to do something. I watch as she curls up, and then I lean to reach my laptop.

I launch my website and click to make a new post. I consider making a long post, detailing out everything Hunter did to Rose, telling

everybody that she was lied to, that she was the innocent party, but I resist the urge. It isn't my truth to tell, it isn't my decision to make, and I know she doesn't want me to post it.

Instead, I post a simple statement.

I know the truth about my wife, and I remain dazzled by her.

I open every single social media engine where I have an account. I post the same statement, along with one of the photographs from the wedding that Maeve took and sent me given we cancelled our session with the photographer to review the wedding pictures. It's a photograph of Rose walking towards me up the aisle, and the stunned expression I knew I would have in the photographs. It's clear I'm dazzled by her, and that we're head over heels in love.

I close the apps and switch off the laptop. I put it away and then pull Rose back towards me. She turns over in the bed, against my chest. I listen to her rhythmic breathing, and then I fall asleep with her.

The morning light wakes me. I'm surprised because the curtains have been closed since we got home. I look around the bedroom. Rose is sitting in the comfortable chair we have in here. Surprisingly, she's dressed, wearing a denim skirt and a top.

"Morning," I comment.

"Breakfast is ready," she replies.

"What's the plan today?" I ask.

"The photographer will be here in an hour, so we can go over the wedding photography," she says.

"Okay. This is exciting."

She nods. "It is. So, get dressed. Breakfast. Photographer. Then tonight..." She pauses and takes a deep breath. "We have tickets to a film premier."

"Sure."

"I'm sorry for letting it get to me so badly, and for putting a dampener on the honeymoon period."

"Rose, my sweet, you have nothing to apologise for. Ever."

"I'm still upset. It's not comfortable being pulled apart in print; I know you know this too. But it's a small piece of me, and it isn't how I want to remember this time. I want to look back at our wedding and our honeymoon and remember the happiness. The joy. The love. That's what important. That's the memories we'll tell our children, and our grandchildren."

"Great-grandchildren too," I add with a small.

"Planning on living forever?" she asks.

"With you, of course."

She gives me a little grin. She looks more like herself, and I'm overjoyed to see it. I know she'll have her highs and lows over the coming weeks as this all settles down, but I know we'll get through it.

I know we're strong enough to survive anything.

I get out of bed. I'm planning on a quick shower before breakfast, but the sight of her laptop, open on the bedside table, stops me. The screen is unlocked. The webpage open is her social media account.

She's reposted the photograph I uploaded last night on my pages. She's added a caption.

You dazzle me too.

I can't help but smile. It isn't just her post making me smile, but her, and the change I can feel in the atmosphere. Like we've turned a corner, together, for the better.

"You and me, forever," she says.

“Forever,” I confirm. She gives me a wide smile, lighting up her whole face, and warming my heart as she does. For what feels like the millionth time, I tell myself how grateful I am for saying yes when Maeve phoned me to collaborate on an album with Rose, leading directly to my destiny and the love of my life.

The woman I’ll defend until my dying breath.

The woman I’ll have children with.

The woman I’ll love and cherish until the end of time, in this lifetime and the next.