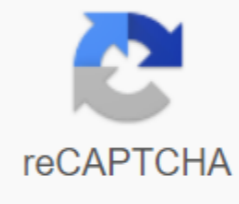




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Grounded rk lilley pdf

Grounded (Up in the Air #3) The story of James and Bianca comes to an end at the explosive conclusion of the Up in The Air Trilogy. After a brief but serious courtship, Bianca can no longer deny her feelings for James, and although she did her best, she can't help but see that he cares deeply about her, too. In a completely uncharacteristic move, she has put aside her doubts and agreed to live with the enigmatic billionaire. Is her leap into the deep end of something wonderful, or is it too much, too fast? As James and Bianca feel a growing need for each other that neither can deny, circumstances beyond their control intervene, trying to tear them apart. Amid the ever-increasing threat of a monster wishing Bianca dead, and the constant pitfalls of an indiscret past that James can't seem to escape, can these two passionate lovers manage to find their happy ever? CHAPTER ONE Mr. Cavendish We rushed to Manhattan in a luxury city car. Stephan and Javier sat close together, hand-clinging, their eyes focused on me in concern. James held me close to him, comforting his hands as she stroked over me. I had discovered a few days ago that my father had remarried after my mother's death. After that revelation, I found out I had a half-brother who was just a year younger than me. That meant my father had been with the other woman for years before my mother died. Before he killed her. I had no love for the woman, Sharon, to whom my father was married. In fact, I felt a cold aversion shivering through my body at just the thought of her. I just found out she was murdered last night, and in the same way as my mother. I didn't like the woman, but since I discovered her existence, I had felt the need to warn her of my father. I was sure she must have known firsthand how offensive and violent he was, but I wanted to warn her what he was capable of, if only to clear my conscience. I had tried, several times, to find her, but I had no luck. Logically or not, I felt a crushing guilt at my failure. James seemed to feel my inner turmoil, and tried to comfort me with his touch. He held me for a few minutes before breaking the heavy silence that had caught up with the four of us. Do you want to have breakfast in a restaurant or in our apartment? His tone was polite. Stephan didn't hesitate. Your apartment. I saw a spread on it in an interior design magazine a few weeks ago. I've been looking forward to getting a tour. James nodded. Good. He checked his watch. Unfortunately I only have an hour before I return My office has to. I stiffened, felt unreasonably disappointed in the news, although I didn't even think he would be there to meet us at the airport. He had it meetings today, but I still couldn't seem to help feel disappointed that we didn't get more time together before he had to get back to work. He seemed to feel the change in me and started rubbing my back reassuringly. He spoke softly to me. I should be able to cut my workday short and come back to the apartment at 4:00, but I'd still like you to come to my office for lunch. You're going to say around 11:00? I'll be there, I told him quickly, because I wanted to get with him every moment I could get. I felt needy for him, like we'd been weeks or months apart instead of days. I'd never been so desperate, not even in the time I forced him to stay away for almost a month. I thought I was more desperate now because I allowed myself to think that maybe he and I would have a future together. The thought both excited me and made my bowels twist with an acute anxiety. He kissed the top of my head, but he didn't say anything about it. We let Stephan and Javier talk enthusiastically about their plans for the day, which included a jog in Central Park and a Broadway show, although they couldn't decide on what. Do you mind if I make us all early for dinner? I'll do it somewhere good, but that may show my own bias because I'll probably own the place. James smiled that self-deprecating smile of his that I've always wanted to trace with my fingertips. Stephan and Javier enthusiastically agreed. I thought it was nice of him to think about it, but I felt a little disappointed. I wanted to spend time alone with him, and even waiting a few extra hours seemed torturous. Clark drove us to the underground garage elevator without being told, giving me a very friendly smile as James helped me out of the car. I smiled back. James's driver/bodyguard was apparently glad we got back together. I liked that he approved of me. Stephan was restless with excitement as the elevator climbed to the penthouse. James gave us a rather rushed tour through the opulent space, making a point of showing off all the spaces that now sported my paintings. I rinsed every time he did, still uncomfortable with compliments about my favorite hobby. The whole place was modern and sleek with the Cavendish designer touch all over it. I had seen it all before, and even I was impressed. He led us down a long hallway with stark modern grey wood lining the floors, ending the tour in the intimidating dining room. Stephan and Javier immediately moved to the window that covered almost the entire wall of the room and overlooked the spectacular view of Central Park. Wow, Javier said quietly. Great, stephan breathed. I to the window next to Stephan, equally impressed by the now familiar view. James wrapped himself around me from behind, leaning towards my ear. Ear. have to go. Your security is waiting at the elevator at 10:00 a.m. to take you to my office. If you need to go somewhere before then, just call the security number you've stored in your phone. A door opened from the kitchen, a smiling Marion peeking in. They got our breakfast orders and cheerfully hustled back to the kitchen. Walk me out? James asked softly, mouth still right on my ear. I shivered, nodded. James said goodbye to Stephan and Javier. He took a shortcut to the elevator. Or rather, I thought it was a shortcut, until he yanked me into a small sitting area. I barely got a look at the vaguely familiar room before he closed the door and crushed me against it, kissing me as if his life depended on it. The kiss had none of his finesse, and not an ounce of his reticence. It was a rough, bruising kiss, and I enjoyed it. I would have kissed him back, but it wasn't that kiss. All I could do was submit, soften my mouth for him-soften my whole body. He abruptly withdrew. I'm moaning a protest. He wrapped one hand around my throat, squeezing just enough to make me pant, the other hand to my mouth. He only put one finger on my lips. I have to go. But I need you. Promise me you'll come to my office at 11:00. I met his beautiful eyes, looking for them. His face and voice were raw with need. And fear. I told you I'd be there, I told him, not sure what he needed from me, or how to take that awful look out of his eyes. Promise me, he said softly, his voice close enough to a plea to hurt my chest. I promise, I said softly. He just nodded, his face painfully solemn. He pulled me after him and followed him to the elevator. He pressed the button, pulled me in his chest while he waited for the car. It wasn't a coincidence that he pressed my cheek over his heart. Right about where he had my name tattooed in crimson. He hasn't kissed me since. He barely looked at me. His professional mask was in place as the elevator closed on my last glimpse of him. I walked back to the dining room on heavy feet. We finished breakfast quickly, all of us ready for a nap. Stephan and Javier stayed on the floor below my bedroom with James, lined with that perfect view of Central Park. I walked them to their door, giving Stephan a perfunctory kiss good night before heading to the room I shared with James. I heard their surprised and excited exclamation marks even as I walked away, and I smiled lovingly. That was the greatest benefit of wealth, I thought. To make others happy. I went to our lonely bedroom. I stood frozen in the doorway to our room for long moments, feeling so strange there James. It felt so empty and strange. I have the minimum amount ready for bed, crawling into bed bed after I had carefully set an alarm. I'd only get a short nap, but it would be worth seeing James in a few hours. I woke up groggy and disoriented, but when the fog came out of my brain and I realized whose bed I was in, and who I would see in just an hour, the fog completely cleared, and I hurried into the shower, nervous and excited. My phone beeped a text to me right as I was re-entering the bedroom, and I went to read it, still wrapped in a towel. Wear a skirt. It was an innocent enough request, from anyone but James perhaps, but from him, my breath caught in breathless anticipation. I didn't know exactly what we could do at his office, so I was braced for just an innocent lunch, although of course I was hoping for more. My mood rose when I was done, excitement pulsing through me. He had plans for me. I just knew. I tried not to be intimidated by my new wardrobe as I flipped through it for a skirt. The labels were things I could never have afforded on my own though, so it was hard for me not to dwell on the fact that I let James spend a fortune on me. I had been counting my pennies for so long that I couldn't help but think it was all a bit of a waste. Half of his colossal wardrobe was now filled with extravagant designer womenswear. There was no way he hadn't spent tens of thousands of dollars on it. I knew it was stupid, but somehow the clothes intimidated me even more than all the diamond jewelry he seemed to have to wear on me. Yes, it was stupid, but the fact was that I knew enough about clothes to have an idea what those labels were worth, while my knowledge about the price of jewelry was beyond negligible. The clothes were all brought together in outfits. I would have been more grateful for that convenience if I hadn't known it had to be Jackie's job. I wasn't really a fan. I quickly chose a comfortable looking azure, silk dress. I tried not to even look at the label, but it didn't work because the Armani Collezioni tag practically jumped out at me. I pulled my bra and panties, pulled the decadently soft fabric over my head, and immediately fell in love. It was more than comfortable, and actually looked great to boot. It hugged my curves in the most flattering way, without the slightest bit of tight. And unlike most of the clothes I usually tried on, it was made for my height, proportions just right, not too short in my torso or legs. Apparently, there was something to spend a fortune on clothes. Of course, most of the clothes I had previously never had more than twenty costs, tops ... There was a whole section of the closet completely dedicated to shoes and I went next door. My mouth bent and my heart warmed up when I saw what James had done there. There were nothing but wedges and running shoes. Of all He had bought for me in this monstrosity of a closet, I thought this was the sweetest. I had the barest mention to him once that the only shoes I liked were wedges and running shoes, and it was obvious that he had listened. All women's shoes peeked out of boxes, and all the boxes were marked with yellow labels sporting numbers in large red letters. My forehead furrowed. The tags on all the clothes had the same. I reached back with a sigh, carefully trying to rip off the tag on my back without damaging the beautiful dress. My forehead furrowed as I saw the number 543 listed on the tag. I studied the rows of shoe boxes, my eyes eventually finding a matching number there. I sighed, my mouth writhed wryly, as I saw the system that had been set up. Jackie apparently didn't trust me to pair my shoes and clothes without help. Help.