

Not What I Wanted

“Let’s ditch the bras!”

Libby’s voice goes a little shrill as she tries to balance her wineglass in one hand and reaches for her bra clasp with the other.

“You just wanna see my tits!” I can’t stop laughing—the rosé is about to spill from my glass.

“Come on, take it off already! It’ll be a killer shot! Babe, tell her it’ll be a killer shot!”

“It’ll be a killer shot,” a man’s voice calls from the upper deck. “She’s always trying to get us naked!”

Shira’s perfect tits bounce right in front of my eyes.

I carefully squeeze in between the two of them. Ahead of us, nothing but sea; behind us, three guys clutching their phones, taking photos.

“Libby, you’ve gotta stop taking these pictures of us. Literally everyone who’s ever set foot on a yacht has this exact same deck shot. You’re basic! And that’s my professional opinion.”

“Oh, shut up and get in the frame already!”

We wrestle our bras back into place and turn to face the guys. “How’d it come out?”

We’re all on a yacht near Genoa, a picturesque Italian city full of massive, colorful, ancient stone buildings, and we’re about to dock in the port with the best affogato I’ve ever tasted. We’re drinking rosé from crystal glasses, nibbling on fish that were still splashing around this morning, and beyond the soothing murmur of the waves, all you can hear is upbeat pop music and our laughter.

We're racing around the yacht, snapping pics—upper deck, then lower—trying to balance being completely wasted with our doomed attempts not to spill the rosé. The sky's that perfect aqua blue that makes every shot flawless, the polished deck and the full-length chrome railing bouncing light back into the frame.

Even the men are grinning and snapping photos—total pros, textbook “Instagram boyfriends”—clinking glasses, not complaining that this is a testosterone-free zone, when normally they'd be sulking about having to deal with a gaggle of insufferable women.

One of the crew pulls out a bright orange inflatable slide and attaches it to the upper deck. We slide down while the men leap straight into the water. No one hears us screaming—there's nothing around us but sea and small white dots that, if we get closer, turn out to be more gleaming yachts just like ours. They lower three Jet Skis for us, and the men tear across the waves with us clinging to them from behind.

Tanned, happy, drunk, and carefree. A perfect scene.

My name's Money.

As in, dollars.

Yeah. I know. But when you're one of Israel's biggest, richest, busiest Instagram stars, you're totally cool with people calling you Money. My life is packed with glossy frames, flights to exotic destinations, wild adventures, jaw-dropping outfits, luxurious hotels, product launches, shoots, and a dream house with an ocean view in North Tel Aviv.

I'm married to Jeff Kaplan. And Jeff isn't just stupidly hot, hilarious, loving, and generous—he's also an extraordinary businessman: a corporate consultant for Israel's biggest companies, and one of the country's greatest relationship coaches. On his TV show, “Couples with Jeff,” he transforms hundreds of thousands of lives, pulling couples out of crises and making them fall in love with each other—and themselves—all over again.

He's Instagram famous, too. And TikTok. He's got a YouTube channel and goes live on Facebook every few days. Lucky for me, that means he supports my career—he gets why a killer shot matters, never whines about taking my picture or driving out to some godforsaken location just because it supposedly has the perfect backdrop for selfies.

I wasn't always called Money. I was born Maria—my mom's nickname for me was Mania. No idea why. Then, when I was around thirteen, some friends heard her call me Mania and loved it. Eventually they shortened that to Money, and it stuck. Not everyone's a fan. But with hundreds of thousands of Instagram followers, an agent who never stops booking me, free clothes and makeup from every brand imaginable, and sponsored flights abroad just for a photo? I honestly couldn't care less what people who don't wake up to an ocean view think.

It's not my fault I got lucky. Besides, up until I was sixteen, I was just some shabby Russian girl from Holon, no money, no dad. Well, until I was about ten I did have a dad who'd drop by sometimes, play with me, bring gifts—but he was a guest star, not a regular cast member. The visits tapered off, then stopped altogether. My mom didn't say much about him, just that he'd had to move back to Russia, and when I asked why we didn't go with him, she'd say, "Israel's better."

My mom, who looked like some ice-cold Hollywood star, never quite belonged in Holon. Back in the Soviet Union she'd been an electronics engineer—or at least that's what she always said when I asked. From what I gathered, she'd worked at some cutting-edge government office, and once mentioned they'd made her sign papers swearing her to secrecy. In Israel she ended up a secretary in a clinic shared by several doctors. Unlike her, I wasn't particularly beautiful, tall, or thin, and I definitely didn't look like those Russian women that modeling agents got so excited about.

I was just an average kid—brown hair that couldn't decide if it wanted to be straight or curly, a stomach that was never quite flat, and eyebrows I didn't know to pluck until way too late.

Around seventeen, it hit me that my dreams were bigger than being a secretary or a mall salesgirl. I wanted to write screenplays. I dreamed of Hollywood. I fell hard for those nineties rom-coms where the heroine doesn't get that she's craving love, and the hero's clueless that she's actually everything he needs. I loved spotting the story patterns, loved watching love beat the odds—especially when the characters didn't want it themselves.

One day my mom found a screenplay I'd written. I walked in and she was sitting on the couch with it laid out in front of her, her face saying it all. "This is what you're doing?" she asked, with that pitying look. "Instead of studying?"

That was the moment I realized I had to prove to her I was worth something—that I could make my own money. The fastest, most logical way was modeling. After a crash diet and a fresh blonde dye job, I hunted down a few Tel Aviv agents and begged for a shot. Most offered an 8,000-shekel "portfolio shoot" and said they'd see what they could do. Luckily, I had enough brain cells to smell the scam. And more importantly, I didn't have 8,000 shekels.