

Chapter 3

Ever since the incident with Gerard, Amelia worked tirelessly to spread rumors that I was drowning in millions of debt and still hopelessly in love with my late husband.

For a time, every single man who knew me avoided me as if I were a plague. Even relatives and friends criticized me behind my back.

“Has Claire lost her mind after Nathan’s death? How is she ever going to pay off all that debt?”

“What a fool. Why doesn’t she just run away with her kid and leave it all behind?”

“Who even cares about these old-fashioned notions anymore? Does she still want to play the martyr?”

Such remarks were endless. To everyone, my decision was simply unbelievable.

However, I ignored them all and focused on running my company according to my original plan.

As Alex grew older, Amelia began visiting our home more frequently. Sometimes, I’d come back from work only to find the house empty.

A quick call would reveal that Amelia had taken Alex out, casually announcing they wouldn’t return that night.

It wasn’t hard to guess—she most likely took Alex to see Nathan.

The more this happened, the colder Alex became toward me.

“Mom, why can’t you dress as stylishly as Aunt Amelia? Thank goodness she’s the one attending my parent-teacher meetings. I’d be so embarrassed if my classmates saw you.”

He didn’t understand that I was working myself to the bone, trying to repay his father’s debts. Who had the time or energy to focus on fashion?

Finally, Mother’s Day arrived—a day I thought we’d spend together as mother and son. Yet, Amelia showed up early, bearing gifts and cake.

“Claire, I know you’re always busy. Today’s finally a chance for you and Alex to spend some quality time together,” she said.

However, she then turned to me and asked, “By the way, Claire, you’ve been working for so long, so those debts must be almost paid off by now, right?”

Alex perked up at the question, looking at me expectantly. “Yes, Mom! We have a company, after all. When will we finally start living the good life?”

Seeing their hopeful expressions, I smiled calmly and replied, “Very soon. There’s just a little left. Our company recently landed a big contract, so we’ll be making plenty of money soon.”

Hearing this, their faces lit up with joy.

“Claire, you’re amazing! All these years of hard work haven’t been in vain,” Amelia praised, unable to hide her excitement.

“Yes, Mom! You’re the best,” Alex chimed in.

Amelia beamed. “Once Alex gets into a good university, you two will finally be living the life! Did you hear that, Alex? Study hard, so your mom can enjoy life later!”

Detecting the mockery in her tone, I couldn’t help but chuckle.

“My dear Amelia, you’d better enjoy this while it lasts. When the time comes, we’ll see who truly prospers.”

That said, I wasn’t lying about the company. Under my management, it had attracted significant investments and was thriving.

Years passed, and Alex graduated from high school and got into Harvard University.

On his eighteenth birthday, I arranged for a grand coming-of-age celebration at the office.

The hall was packed with relatives and employees. Through the glass doors, I noticed reporters discreetly filming and interviewing outside; Amelia probably invited them.

Smiling faintly, I took the stage, unflustered by the attention.

“Our girl boss is incredible! Raising a child alone and building a business—she’s a true role model!”

“Yeah, and her late husband adored her. Didn’t he sacrifice his life to save her?”

“It’s such a touching story. Now that her son’s all grown up, she’s finally made it.”

As the crowd praised me, the reporters snapped photo after photo, documenting my journey as an inspiring businesswoman.

However, just as I announced the start of the ceremony, a commotion broke out near the entrance.

The crowd parted, creating a path for someone to walk through. Gasps filled the room as everyone stared in disbelief.

“Wait a minute! Isn’t that Claire’s dead husband, Nathan?”

“And why is her cousin sister Amelia with him? What’s going on between those two?”