

## Chapter 5

I woke to the sterile scent of antiseptic and the soft, rhythmic beeping of a machine. My head throbbed, and a dull ache radiated from my arm, which was wrapped in a thick bandage.

The memories of the gala came rushing back, a tidal wave of humiliation and pain. The shove. The fall. The blood.

"Elana? You're awake."

Ayla, my best friend, was sitting by my bed, her eyes red and swollen. She looked like she hadn't slept in days.

"You scared me half to death," she whispered, her voice thick with tears. She grabbed my hand, her grip tight and grounding.

A sob escaped my lips, a raw, wounded sound. "Ayla..."

"Are your parents...?" I started to ask, my throat tight.

"No, I didn't tell them," she said quickly. "I didn't want them to worry."

She squeezed my hand. "What happened, Elana? What in the hell is going on?"

The dam broke. I told her everything. The e-vite, the christening, the lies, the gala. I told her about Hayden and the baby, and the baby I had just lost.

Ayla's face hardened, her sadness replaced by a white-hot fury. "That bastard. I'm going to kill him."

She stood up, ready to storm out of the room, but I grabbed her arm.

"No, Ayla. It's not worth it." My voice was hollow, empty. "It's over. We're over."

All I wanted was to be free of him, to put as much distance between us

as possible.

She sank back into the chair, defeated, and pulled me into a hug. We just sat there for a long time, the silence broken only by her quiet sobs.

"I don't want you to go," she whispered, her tears soaking the shoulder of my hospital gown.

"We'll see each other again," I promised, though I wasn't sure I believed it myself.

I spent five days in the hospital. Emilio never came. Not once. He didn't call. He didn't send a message. It was as if I had ceased to exist.

Each day, I crossed off another number on the calendar on my phone. Nine days until my flight to Zurich. Nine days until I could escape this life.

The day I was discharged, Ayla was there. We went straight from the hospital to my lawyer's office to pick up the divorce papers.

"He'll never sign this, Elana," Ayla said, looking at the thick stack of documents. "He's too proud, too controlling."

I stared out the window, my expression unreadable. "He will."

The love I had for him was dying, and my heart was turning to stone along with it. "I have a plan."

After dropping Ayla off, I did some digging. It wasn't hard to find Hayden Cleveland's favorite coffee shop.

She was sitting at a corner table when I walked in. Her eyes widened in fear when she saw me, her hand instinctively flying to her chest.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, her voice a nervous whisper. "Are you here for revenge?"

I looked at her, my face a cold, emotionless mask. "Cut the act, Hayden. I know you orchestrated the whole thing at the gala."

The innocent, frightened look on her face dissolved, replaced by a smug, arrogant smirk. She leaned back in her chair, her eyes raking over me with disdain.

"You should have left him a long time ago," she said, her voice a low, threatening hiss. "He's mine. We have a child together."

The words still had the power to hurt, a dull ache in my chest. But I pushed it down.

I placed the divorce agreement on the table between us.

"I want out," I said, my voice steady. "Get him to sign this, and I will disappear from your lives forever."

She looked at me, surprised by my directness, then a slow, calculating smile spread across her face. She picked up the papers, her eyes scanning the first page.

"Are you sure about this?" she asked, feigning concern.

I just stared at her, my silence her answer. We exchanged numbers, and I stood to leave.

"You know, he stayed with me the whole time you were in the hospital," she called after me, her voice dripping with venomous sweetness. "He never even asked about you. He was too worried about our Leo."

I didn't need her to tell me. I already knew.

I paused at the door and looked back at her, my expression unreadable. "Did you get what you wanted?"

A triumphant smile lit up her face. "Of course. He refuses to have another child, you know. He told me Leo will be his only one. He made a promise."

Her words were meant to be the final, killing blow.

"So you see," she continued, her voice rising with confidence, "you have nothing left to fight for. Just sign the papers and go."

She left the coffee shop, her laughter echoing behind her.

I stood there, my hand unconsciously drifting to my stomach. The baby I would never hold. The baby he had promised would never exist, even as I was carrying it.

< Chapter 5


I finally understood. There was nothing left to save.

Our ads aim to provide better support for authors.



👉 I want no ads >

100,0%

11:49 

## Chapter 6

He came home that night smelling of expensive whiskey and another woman's perfume. He stumbled through the door and wrapped his arms around me from behind, his chin resting on my shoulder.

"Why are you like this, Elana?" he slurred, his voice thick with a confusing mix of anger and sorrow. "We were so good together. What happened?"

He sounded genuinely bewildered, as if he were the victim. As if he had no idea why the woman he had publicly humiliated and abandoned was cold to him.

"You used to be so kind," he whispered, his words a clumsy attempt at emotional blackmail.

I knew this move. This was his go-to tactic. Whenever we fought, he would come home drunk, wrap his arms around me, and play the part of the wounded, misunderstood man until I softened, until I forgave him.

It used to work. I used to find his drunken vulnerability endearing.

But now, all I felt was disgust. He had a wife and a child waiting for him somewhere else, and he still thought he could manipulate me with the same old tricks.

"It's not going to work anymore, Emilio," I said, my voice flat. I pushed his arms away and started to walk towards the door. I couldn't stand to be in the same room with him.

He lunged forward, grabbing me and pulling me back against his chest, his grip painfully tight.

"I'm not signing any divorce papers," he growled, his voice losing its sorrowful edge and hardening with resolve. "I'm not letting you go."

He buried his face in my neck, and I felt something wet on my skin. He was crying. The great Emilio Thomas, the man who never showed weakness, was crying.



For a moment, I was stunned. My body went stiff, unsure how to react.

Then, the cold reality hit me. This was just another performance. A more dramatic one, perhaps, but still a performance. How many times had he cried in Hayden's arms, lamenting his difficult wife?

A bitter smile touched my lips. I tried to pull away, but his grip was like iron.

"Okay," I said, my voice suddenly calm. "We won't get a divorce."

He instantly relaxed his hold, a wave of relief washing over his face. I gently led him to the bedroom, helped him out of his jacket, and tucked him into bed as if he were a child.

As soon as he was asleep, I slipped out of the room.

The moonlight cast long shadows across his handsome face. He looked peaceful, almost innocent in his sleep. I used to love watching him like this, dreaming of our future. Now, all I felt was a vast, empty expanse of disappointment.

His phone, the one he kept for his secret life, lay on the nightstand. It lit up with a notification.

A message from Hayden.

"He's asleep now. I'll see you tomorrow at the office. Same time."

I turned off the screen and left the room, closing the door softly behind me. I would not sleep in that bed again.