

Chapter 2

Upon returning to Elmwood Chateau, Wylder promptly approached Mateo with a concerned expression. "Sir, Mrs. Bagetto... I mean, Ms. Alston, waited for you at home for an hour. When you didn't return, she went straight to the Bagetto family's house. She requested you to join her once you arrived." Mateo's face darkened at the news; he couldn't fathom why Brooklyn wouldn't wait a few minutes longer. Turning abruptly, he headed back to the car with a somber expression and drove away.

As Mateo drove, he reflected on how Brooklyn's demeanor had drastically changed. When she insisted on marrying him, he believed she had fallen in love, but her current actions painted a starkly different picture. It appears the determined woman who had pursued him wasn't the same Brooklyn he knew.

Mateo's grip on the steering wheel tightened, mirroring the storm of emotions within him. Arriving at the gate of the Bagetto family's old house, just as Brooklyn was about to enter, an unknown number called her.

"Brooklyn, wait for me at the gate!" Mateo's voice echoed through the phone. Brooklyn glanced around, spotting a surveillance camera nearby. Though she frowned, she maintained a composed smile. "Can you see me?" Instead of responding, Mateo abruptly ended the call.

In less than half an hour, Mateo arrived at the Bagetto family's old house. Spotting Brooklyn's car by the gate, he briskly approached, expecting her to have gone inside without him. However, to his surprise, Brooklyn sat on the hood of the car, awaiting his arrival. Her posture suggested contemplation as she toyed with her phone, raising her eyes thoughtfully when she saw him approach.

Mateo's icy gaze met hers as he neared her. Brooklyn set aside her phone, adjusted her dress, and slowly walked toward him. Extending her slender arm, she encircled his firm waist, pulling him closer.

"Why do you have access to Bagetto family surveillance?" Brooklyn inquired, her head tilted slightly, and her eyes locked onto his. The proximity between them heightened the tension, and Mateo felt an unexpected nervousness. However, in the next moment, his expression darkened, and he attempted to push her away. Unyielding, Brooklyn smirked and clung to his waist. "Someone's watching us."

Mateo narrowed his eyes, confirming the presence of a figure upstairs in the Bagetto family's old house. As Brooklyn loosened her grip, he hurried inside. "You haven't answered my question," she called after him, reaching out to stop him. "Why do you have access to the Bagetto family's surveillance?" The Bagetto family compound was known for its stringent security measures in Meridiania.

Before Matthew's accident, Mateo hadn't even been given the opportunity to approach the gates of the Bagetto family estate. Brooklyn's curious gaze lingered on him as she inquired, but Mateo met her with indifference, pushing away the hand that impeded his progress. "I don't have access, and I don't understand what you're talking about," he asserted coolly.

Raising her eyebrows, Brooklyn followed Mateo into the Bagetto family's old house, her doubts still lingering. As they stepped into the courtyard, Mateo's grandmother, Lydia, emerged with the assistance of the butler and a cane in hand. Despite the faint smile, she addressed them, "You're finally back. Daniel, tell the kitchen to serve the dishes. Then go and have my husband and Rylee to come down." The butler nodded and left.

Approaching Lydia, Brooklyn extended a helpful hand with a smile. "Sorry to keep you waiting, Grandma. Mateo has just taken over the company's affairs and has been a little busy recently, so he didn't pay attention to the time." Lydia nodded understandingly, glancing at Mateo before advising in a low voice, "Even though you're busy with the company's affairs, you still need to pay attention to your health." Mateo acknowledged her words with a silent nod.

Meanwhile, Rylee Barkley, Mateo's mother, descended with a warm smile upon seeing Brooklyn. She seized Brooklyn's hands and exclaimed, "Brooklyn, why are you back so late? Why didn't you come back earlier to take a walk with me?" Having watched Brooklyn grow up, Rylee held a genuine fondness for her. Additionally, after Matthew's tragic demise, Brooklyn's marriage to Mateo alleviated some of Rylee's anxiety, giving her a certain level of control over Mateo.

Brooklyn responded to Rylee's inquiry with a smiling demeanor and a touch of respect in her words. Mateo, observing this interaction, cast a cold glance her way, a hint of contempt in his eyes. He couldn't shake the feeling that Brooklyn was adept at winning the hearts of Lydia and Rylee, suspecting that she had ulterior motives.

After the meal, Lydia set down her spoon, addressing Mateo, "Stay here tonight. Tomorrow morning, the head of the Bagetto family will come to take you to the cemetery. Both of you can stay the night, sparing him an additional trip." Brooklyn massaged the side of her head, stealing a sidelong glance at Mateo. Observing his silence, she cleared her throat, prepared to decline the offer. Unexpectedly, Mateo, who had been silently beside her, broke his silence with a casual "Okay."

Surprised, Brooklyn looked at him, eyebrows raised. Mateo maintained an indifferent expression, casually remarking, "Brooklyn can also spend more time with you tonight." Doubt flickered in Brooklyn's eyes. It was hard to believe that someone harboring so much disdain for the Bagetto family, like Mateo, would willingly agree to stay. Despite her inclination to refuse, she couldn't find a suitable reason to do so.

Later that evening, in Lydia's room, Rylee held Brooklyn's hand, expressing gratitude for Brooklyn's role in bringing Mateo closer to the family. Before Brooklyn could respond, Lydia nodded in agreement. "Brooklyn, in the future, we'll need your help to mend our relationship with Mateo. He likely harbors resentment against us, and it's up to you to determine if that resentment will fade away."

After leaving Lydia's room, Brooklyn felt a weight on her mind. She didn't want to be entangled in the conflict between Mateo and the Bagetto family. When Rylee accompanied her out of Lydia's room, they chatted for a while. As they concluded, Rylee asked the butler to escort Brooklyn back to her room.

"Brooklyn, I'm afraid I can't go with you. I might be reminded of something sad." Brooklyn was briefly taken aback but nodded in understanding. The room Lydia assigned to Brooklyn and Mateo was situated next to Matthew's.

As Brooklyn wandered along the hallway, she kindly dismissed the butler, Daniel, assuring him she could manage the rest of the way herself. Once alone, an inexplicable force seemed to lead her to a stop before Matthew's door. In her mind, she envisioned a charming young man emerging to welcome her.

Gazing at the firmly closed door, Brooklyn's hand hesitated but eventually reached for the handle. As her fingers touched it, the door swung open unexpectedly from the inside. The sight of Mateo stepping towards her caught her off guard, momentarily blending with the elegant image she had envisioned.