

Lost Me Gained Regret

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Chapter 1

Chapter 1

On our third wedding anniversary, Bryant Ferguson paid big money to get me the necklace I'd been eyeing for ages.

Everyone around us said he was head over heels in love with me.

Filled with joy, I was busy preparing a candlelit dinner when a video popped up on my phone. In the video, Bryant put the necklace around another woman's neck, saying, "Congrats on your fresh start."

It turned out it wasn't just our anniversary. It was also the day his first love was finalizing her divorce.

I never in imagined something like this could happen to me. Though my marriage to Bryant wasn't born out of a whirlwind romance, he always played the role of the doting husband in public.

I sat at the dining table, staring at the cold steak and the trending topic, [Bryant Spends Millions To Make His Wife's Happy.]

It all felt like a cruel joke.

At 2 a.m., a sleek black Mercedes finally pulled into the driveway.

I could see him stepping out through the glass door, impeccably dressed in a tailor-made- dark suit, his presence commanding yet elegant.

"Why are you still up?" Bryant turned on the lights, surprised to find me in the dining room. Trying to stand up, I fell back into the chair, my legs numb. "I'm waiting for you." I replied.

"Missed me?" Bryant gave a casual smile, poured himself a glass of water, and glanced at the untouched dinner with a hint of surprise.

He wanted to play it cool, so I suppressed my feelings, reaching out to him with a smile. "Happy anniversary. You got me a gift?"

"Sorry, I was so busy today. I forgot it." He paused for a second, realizing what day it was, and tried to ruffle my hair, which I instinctively dodged.

I didn't know where his hands had been tonight, and the thought disgusted me.

He looked slightly stunned.

Pretending not to notice, I kept smiling "Don't try to fool me. You specifically bid on my favorite necklace, It's all over the news! Give it to me."

"Jane. "Bryant slowly withdrew his hand, his expression unreadable, his voice calm. "I bid

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that necklace for Steven."

As the internet says, a buddy is always the best shield.

I struggled to keep my smile. "Is that so?"

"Yeah, you know how he attracts girls. Bryant's tone and expression were flawless.

While looking at him in the lights, his perfect features made me wonder if I ever knew this man. And I began to question, was this the first time he lied to me? Or had I been too trusting before? I wouldn't have doubted his explanation if it hadn't been for that anonymous video.

Seeing my silence, he patiently tried to comfort me. "I shouldn't have forgotten such an important day. I'll make it up to you with a gift tomorrow."

I insisted. "I only want that necklace."

I wanted to give him a chance.

Bryant hesitated for a moment, and I looked at him, puzzled. "Can't you do this for me? Asking Steven to give up one of his flings for your sake shouldn't be a problem, right?"

After a pause, he finally spoke, "I'll call tomorrow. It's not right to forcefully take what someone loves."

"Is the someone him or her?' I wondered.

I couldn't press further. "Okay."

"Have you been waiting to eat with me?" As Bryant cleared the table, his graceful hand's moved over the fine cutlery.

I nodded. "Yeah, it's our anniversary, after all."

When I got up to help, he stopped me with a gentle voice. "Just sit. Let me cook some pasta for you."

"Okay." While watching him like that, my doubts momentarily faded.

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Could this casual and caring?

a straved man ever!

It was odd. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Bryant was also a whiz in the kitchen, whipping up delicious meals in no time.

Yet, he hardly ever cooked. But he served up an enticing tomato meat sauce pasta in about fifteen minutes.

"It's not bad!" I didn't hold back my praise after taking a bite. "Who taught you to cook? It is better than any restaurant's food."

He seemed momentarily lost in thought, his expression clouded. After a half- minute pause, he said quietly, "For those two years I spent studying abroad, I had to learn to fend for myself to satisfy my cravings for home."

It was just casual conversation on my part, and I didn't think much more of it. After bathing and lying in bed, it was already past three in the morning.

Behind me, Bryant's warm body pressed against mine, his chin resting in the crook of my neck, gently nuzzling.

"Feeling it?" His voice was rough as if sanded down, his breath on my skin sending shivers down my spine.

Before I could respond, he leaned over, his hand slipping under the hem of my silk nightdress.

He was always dominant in bed, leaving little room for resistance.

But this time, I had to decline. "Honey, not tonight..." My voice was as weak as my body, melting into a puddle.

"Hmm?" Bryant continued to kiss my neck, his hand venturing lower, his words turning my cheeks scarlet. "This seems quite welcoming. Don't you agree?"

"I... I have a stomachache today."

At that, he finally ceased his actions, gently kissing my earlobe and pulling me into his embrace. "I forgot it. You're due for your period."

My relaxation was short-lived as I turned to gaze at him, unblinking. "My period was at the beginning of the month. It's already passed."

"Is that so?" He seemed calm, questioning himself, "My memory must've played tricks on me. Is the pain severe? Maybe Emma should take you to the clinic tomorrow."

I replied, "I've already been this morning."

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"What did the doctor say?" asked Bryant.

I lowered my eyes, hesitating briefly.

The doctor had said I was five weeks pregnant. The stomach pain was due to a threatened miscarriage, advising me to take progesterone supplements and check back for the fetal heartbeat in a fortnight.

Finding out about the pregnancy on our anniversary should have been the best gift.

I had hidden the pregnancy test in a small glass jar and buried it in a homemade cake, planning to surprise Bryant during our candlelit dinner.

But at the moment, that cake was still untouched in the fridge.

"It's nothing serious. Maybe I've had too many cold drinks lately." I kept it hidden for the time, thinking everything would be fine if that necklace returned the next day.

But if it didn't, our marriage would be strained by the presence of the other woman. Telling him about the baby would then seem pointless.

That night, I tossed and turned, unable to sleep. No woman could come to terms with the possibility of her husband's infidelity.

Unexpectedly, the issue weighing on my mind soon evolved.

The next day, while Bryant was still in the bathroom, there was a knock on the door.

Just having changed, I opened it to find Emma pointing downstairs "Mrs. Ferguson, Miss Margaret is here, saying she's returning something."

Margaret Ferguson, Bryant's step-sister from his stepmother older by two years, was technically a Ferguson family lady.

Sent by the Ferguson family to look after us, Emma habitually referred to her as

"Miss Margaret."

I was puzzled. Margaret and I hardly interacted outside family gatherings at the Ferguson Mansion, let alone En exchanged belongings.

"Returning something?" I was curious.

"Yes, it's in an elegant jewelry box. It looks like some jewel," Emma replied.

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'Jewelry?' I frowned slightly and raised my voice to Bryant, who had just entered the bathroom. "Bryant, Margaret is here. I'm going down to see her."

Almost instantly, Bryant emerged, his expression colder than I had ever seen before..

"I'll handle it. You don't need to worry about it. Go freshen up." Bryant, always composed and reserved before me, spoke with a hint of unspoken emotion, sounding irritated and anxious.

A strange feeling arose within me. "I've freshened up. Remember? I even squeezed the toothpaste out for you."

"Okay then. Let's go down together. We shouldn't keep our guest waiting." Bryant said.

I grabbed his hand, and we made our way downstairs.

The staircase spiraled elegantly, and halfway down, we could see Margaret sitting gracefully on the sofa in her simple white dress.

She looked up at the sound of our footsteps, her smile serene. When her gaze fell on Bryant and me holding hands, her cup trembled slightly, spilling a few drops.

It must have been a bit hot, and she cried out softly in her flurry, "Ah..."

Bryant quickly withdrew his hand and rushed down the stairs, taking the cup from her with a mix of panic and haste. "How can you be so careless? Can't even hold a cup properly?".

His tone was stern and harsh, leaving no room for argument. He then grabbed Margaret's hand and brought her to the sink to rinse off with cold water, Feeling helpless, Margaret tried to pull her hand back. "I'm fine. You're making a big deal out of nothing."

"Shut up. Burns can scar if not treated properly, you know?" Bryant scolded sharply, still not letting go.

I stood on the stairs, dazed, watching the scene unfold, my mind a whirl.

Images flashed through my mind. When we first married, I learned Bryant had a sensitive stomach and began to cook. Even though we had Emma, her dishes didn't quite agree with him.

As a beginner, I often cut or burnt myself. One time, I accidentally tipped over a pot, and the splashing oil made me clench my teeth in pain.

Hearing the commotion, Bryant came over, as always, and said gently, "Are you okay? You go and take care of that. I can finish up here."

He acted gentle and caring yet so detached.

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I sometimes had the nagging feeling that something was off. But having secretly adored Bryant for so many years, with countless diary entries about him, marrying him was more than enough for me. I thought perhaps it was just his nature to be reserved and subdued.

Emma interrupted, "It was lemonade that I got for Miss Margaret."

Emma's muttering snapped me back to reality. My vision blurred, and my heart felt as if it was tightly clenched, making it hard to breathe, Bryant had personally taken the cup from Margaret. But in his concern, he failed to notice whether the liquid was hot or cold.

I took a deep breath and stepped down the stairs, my voice tinged with sarcasm. "Honey, Emma got Margaret some lemonade. It's cold. It won't burn. Maybe you should worry if she might get frostbite instead?" I couldn't hold back the sarcasm.

Bryant froze, then let go of her hand, avoiding my gaze, and scolded Margaret, "Crying out over cold water? fussy."

ally you would be s Margaret shot him a look and then turned to me with a gentle smile. "That's just how he is, always overreacting. Don't mind him."

Then, she walked over to the coffee table, picked up a velvet gift boxm clearly expensive just by its craftsmanship, and handed it to me,

With a warm smile, she said, "This belongs to you."

I took it, feeling my nails dig into my palm. A storm surged within me.

'The woman in the video, was it Margaret?' I wondered.

When I looked up again, hiding my emotions, I tried to smile, but couldn't.

Just the night before, I had forced K

Bryant to take back the necklace, and at the moment, holding it in my hand, I couldn't feel any relief,

I looked at Bryant, probing, as he avoided my gaze. Then, he pulled me close. "Do you like it If yes, it's all yours. If not, feel free to pass it on. It's just a trinket, not worth much. I'll buy you another gift."

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"Fine." I pursed my lips, ultimately deciding to leave a shred of dignity for him before Margaret. Or perhaps it was for my own sake.

For the moment, I couldn't quite pin down Margaret's purpose for her visit. Was she genuinely feeling she shouldn't accept the necklace? Or was she there to declare something?-

A flicker of emotion passed across Margaret's face too swiftly to be caught. She smiled. "I was worried this necklace might cause some misunderstanding between you two. Seems like it hasn't, so I'll be heading back now."

Emma escorted her out.

As soon as the front door closed, I stepped away from Bryant's embrace, "You said it was for Steven, right? And Margaret's married, isn't she? Since when did she become one of Steven's flings? Hmm..."

Bryant silenced me with a kiss, fierce and urgent, almost as if venting some frustration.

Only when I found it hard to breathe did he slightly loosen his hold, caressing my head as he admitted his fault. "I lied to you."

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He pulled me close. "Margaret's divorced. I was worried about her, so I gave her the gift."

I was startled. Then I got what Bryant meant by "Congrats on your fresh start" in the video.

I bit my lip, half-doubting, "Is that all?"

"That's all." His voice was firm and soothing as he explained, "You know Margaret's mother saved my life at the cost of her own. I couldn't just ignore her."

I had heard about that from Emma. Bryant's biological mother died during childbirth, and when he was five, his father remarried Margaret's mother.

Despite being a stepmother, she was kind to Bryant, treating him as her child. She even went so far as to risk her life to save Bryant, ending up in a vegetative state for many years.

If it was for that reason, it made sense.

I felt a weight lift off my shoulders, yet I couldn't help but gently remind him, "Bryant, I believe you just wanted to repay a debt of gratitude, and you only see her as a sister."

That necklace eventually ended up in storage.

Perhaps, my suspicions hadn't completely vanished. They were just temporarily

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I froze solid for a moment. It was as if I needed to double-check to ensure what I read in the email was real.

Yes, there was no mistake. Margaret, who parachuted to become the head of the Design Department, would be my direct supervisor.

"Jane, do you know her?" Christine noticed my offbeat reaction, waved a hand before my face, and voiced her guess.

I put down my phone, replying, "Yeah, Margaret is Bryant's half-sister, the one I mentioned to you before."

After graduation, everyone scattered to the winds, but Christine and I, having been thick as thieves since college, had made a pact to stay in RiverCity, come hell or high water.

Christine clicked her tongue. "Damn, talk about nepotism."

I stayed quiet, nodding along to what she was saying.

"Has Bryant lost his mind?" Christine didn't hold back on her complaints, venting on my behalf, "Why her? I've never even heard of her in the design circles. And Bryant, just like that, hands her the director's spot? And you, what does he think of you..."

"All right, that's enough." I cut her off gently, "It doesn't matter. If he wants to give it to me, he will."

And if he didn't, someone else would.

But since we were in the company cafe, I didn't think it necessary to air these thoughts out loud to avoid giving the gossipmongers any fodder.

"Do you have plans then?" Christine knew me well enough to guess. As we left the caf and saw no one around, she sneaked a question, draping an arm over my shoulder.

I raised an eyebrow. "What do you think?"

Christine pressed further, "Come on, Jane. Spill it."

I replied, "I guess you could say that, but I haven't decided yet."

Four years into my job, I'd never m

thought about jumping ship. The Ferguson Group felt like my comfort zone. Leaving would probably require a push, something, or someone to give me a push.

Back in the office, I dove into designing a new limited edition for Christmas, skipping lunch.

Technically, it should've been a task for the director, but with the director's position vacant it naturally fell to the deputy director, so I had to buckle down.

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Jane, coffee." Around two, my assistant Linda knocked and entered, placing a cup of coffee on my desk.

I smiled. "Thanks."

She saw me working on the design drafts, puzzled. "Jane, how can you stay calm enough to design? I heard the new boss didn't even go through a proper interview process. She just took the director's position. Aren't you mad?"

I chuckled wryly, unsure of what to say.

'Mad? Of course, I'm mad. But it isn't something I can discuss with a subordinate.' I thought.

"Everyone, listen up." Outside the office, a commotion arose as Kevin gathered everyone together.

Through the glass, the scene in the public office area was clear as day.

In a custom-tailored dark suit, Bryant stood with his hands in his pockets, exuding an air of aloof nobility just by being there. Beside him, Margaret, who was poised and confident, glanced at Bryant with a subdued expression as if seeking help.

He frowned slightly, showing signs of impatience, but still indulged her.

In a calm voice, he introduced her, "This is Margaret Ferguson, the new head of the Design Department. I hope everyone will cooperate with her."

Margaret looked at him with disdain. "Why so serious?"

Then, with a chill and friendly grin, she turned to everyone and said, "Don't mind it. I'm easy to talk to and won't be stirring things up just because I'm new. Feel free to talk to me if there's anything I'm not doing right."

With the CEO backing her, the atmosphere naturally turned harmonious.

Linda couldn't hold back, making a face. "Oh come on, talk about nepotism. She clearly snagged the job."

I was already feeling out of sorts, but hearing her tone, I couldn't help but laugh a bit.

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Outside Bryant was escorting Margaret to the director's office door.

"Come on, what's there to worry about? With that scowl of yours, who'd dare approach me?" Margaret playfully nudged Bryant, her tone teasing with fake affection, but her face was full of genuine smiles.

I took a sip of my coffee, which tasted incredibly bitter.

Seeing my frown, Linda took it over to taste it and said, "It's not bitter. I even added two sugar cubes today, hoping to sweeten your day."

Knock.

Margaret shooed Bryant out, and Bryant turned, heading to my office.

I watched him intently, wishing I could see through to his heart.

"I'll go make you another cup," Linda said, seizing the opportunity to escape.

Bryant sauntered in, shutting the door behind him, and explained calmly, "It's her first job. She was a bit nervous and asked me to help her settle in."

"Really," I replied with a smile, "I hadn't-noticed,

First, Bryant, no less than the CEO himself, introduced her. Then, with her easy banter, she made it clear her relationship with Bryant was no shallow pond despite her saying she was easy to talk to and things like that.

But it was like revealing a royal flush at a poker game. Who would dare bluff after that?

"Look, she might be older than you, but in terms of work, you're her senior. And you're more skilled in design. The team respects you more," Bryant said as he came up behind me, massaging my shoulders to soothe me. "You don't need to bother with her. Just make sure she's not getting bullied, okay?"

For the first time, I felt an uncontrollable anger toward Bryant.

I shrugged off his hands and stood up abruptly, asking pointedly. "Well if that's true, then why is she the director and I'm not?"

The words came out more directly than I intended.

Even Bryant, usually so composed, showed a flicker of surprise in his eyes.

Yes. Three years into our marriage, we had lived in mutual respect rather than passionate love. We had never fought or argued. He probably thought I was too meek to get angry. But I didn't regret saying those words.

If the director's position had gone to someone more capable than me, I would have

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accepted it without question. But it went to Margaret, and shouldn't I at least be allowed to ask why?

It the first time Bryant saw the sharp side of me, his lips pressed in a thin line. "Jane, are you angry about this?"

"Shouldn't I be?" I asked him back.

In front of others, I could pretend everything was fine, putting on a generous façade. But in front of my husband, wasn't our marriage a failure if I still needed to hide my feelings?

"Silly, aren't you?" He grabbed the remote, turned the glass from clear to frosted, and pulled me into his arms. "The Ferguson Group is all yours. Why care about one position?" "The Ferguson Group is yours, not mine." I retorted.

I could only cling to this little piece of land before me.

He lifted my chin, looking stern. "We're husband and wife. Whatever is mine is yours."

"Then how about transferring some shares to me?" I joked. I watched him closely, not wanting to miss any hint of his reaction. Surprisingly, there was none.

He raised an eyebrow, asking, "How much?"

I said, "Ten percent."

If I were serious, that would be asking for the moon. After marrying me, Bryant took over the already massive Ferguson Group and expanded its business empire several times under his leadership. Not to mention ten percent, even one percent would be worth a fortune.

I never expected him to agree. It was just a random figure I threw out.

"Okay," he said.

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He agreed without a second's hesitation. No dithering, no second-guessing.

With my arms looped around his neck and a playful smile on my lips, I looked into his eyes, shimmering with amusement. "Ten percent, you sure you're okay with that?"

His clear and serene eyes met mine. "It's for you, my wife, not for someone else."

At that moment, I had to admit that money was a powerful way to show loyalty. The tension I had been holding in all afternoon found its release.

As if trying to prove a point, I teased, "What about Margaret, though? Would you give it to her?"

He paused briefly before giving a firm answer, "No."

"Really?" I doubted it.

"Uh huh, all I can offer her is that position." Bryant pulled me into his embrace, his voice cold and steady, "The share transfer agreement, I'll have Kevin send it to you this afternoon. From now on, you're one of the bosses at Ferguson Group. Everyone else works for you."

"What about you?" I asked, my mood significantly lifted, a playful smile dancing on my lips.

He raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean?"

"Are you working for me, too?" I joked.

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"Of course." Bryant chuckled, ruffling my hair before he leaned in to whisper, "I'm at y service, in and out of bed."

My face flushed with heat, and I shot him a glare.

That was just like him, all serious and dignified on the surface, but now and then, he'd drop a line that could make En anyone blush.

Seeing my mood shift from cloudy to sunny, he glanced at his watch. "I need to head up for a meeting. M Today's Thanksgiving. We should head back to the Ferguson Mansion tonight for dinner with Grandpa. I'll wait for you in the parking lot."

"Got it." I wouldn't dream of refusing, my mind ticking away made am decision "Honey, I've got a surprise for you tonight."

my pregnancy, especially The other day, I was uncertain about whether to tell him about my pr after the necklace incident.

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Since he had shown who mattered more to him between me and Margaret, there was no reason for me to keep it a secret any longer.

"What kind of surprise?" Bryant's curiosity was piqued, and he wanted to know immediately.

"I'll tell you after work. Wait for me!" I tiptoed for a quick kiss on his lips, then turned away, leaving him standing there.

After Bryant left, I finally managed to focus on my design drafts. I had no idea how long it had been before someone knocked on my office door again.

"Come in," I said, without looking up.

"Jane, am I disturbing you?" Margaret's gentle voice came through.

"A bit," I admitted because I hated interruptions when rushing a design draft.

Margaret's expression turned awkward for a moment, but she plowed ahead. "Sorry, I didn't mean to. I just found out that the Director position of the Design Department was supposed to be yours. I inadvertently took the position meant for you, so I'm here to apologize."

"It's okay," I said casually.

Bryant had already compensated me: I couldn't make as much working my whole life as a design director as I could owning ten percent of the shares.

Perhaps my indifferent and relaxed demeanor surprised Margaret.

"Are you sure? If it bothers you, let me know, and I can switch departments. I don't want this to upset you," she said, settling onto the sofa comfortably.

"Margaret, I'm not upset. You can stay in the Design Department."

'Please, just stop making a fuss. I thought, fearing the company would go under before I could enjoy my shares with her around. At least in the Design Department, I could keep things under control.

"That's good. We're family here, so if you feel free to talk to me if you're upset. Don't keep it all bottled up."

Acting the understanding sister, Margaret tucked her hair behind her ear and added softly "Anyway, Bryant said I could pick any position in the company. I haven't worked for many years, so it doesn't matter which department I end up in."

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I mean, maybe it was just me being oversensitive, or not, but her words really hit a nerve.

It felt like Margaret was implying she was closer to Bryant as if she was the real queen bee of the Ferguson Group.

"Director Webster." Noticing the door ajar, Kevin gave a symbolic knock before stepping in and handing me a document. "Here's the agreement, two copies. Mr. Ferguson has signed. Just sign your copy and keep it."

Bryant was always quick to act.

"Okay." I quickly went through the document, signed my name with a flourish, and handed a copy back to Kevin with a polite smile. "Thanks for your efforts."

"Is this a share transfer agreement?" Margaret seemed to glimpse the document cover.

Out of my sight, her previously calm and elegant demeanor shattered, her nails digging into her flesh.

Looking surprised, Kevin said, "Oh, Ms. Ferguson is here, too. You two go ahead. I'll head upstairs to report back to Mr. Ferguson."

He skillfully dodged Margaret's question and made a swift exit.

Margaret's eyes mixed with disbelief. "Bryant gave you shares?"

"Regardless, I don't think this is something that I need to report to you, right, Mr. Ferguson?"

After the necklace incident, my feelings toward Margaret were complicated. It was hard to remain neutral like before.

"Jane, I feel like you're harboring animosity toward me." Margaret stood up, looking helpless. "I don't know if it's about the necklace or this job position, but please believe me. I never intended to take anything from you I'm not interested in those things, she said.

Her frankness left me feeling conflicted.

As the evening approached, I placed the pregnancy test I'd found in a cake a few days ago into my bag.

I was ready to go downstairs and tell Bryant he would be a father. We were going to have a baby. While imagining his reaction, thinking of the new life growing inside me, my steps quickened with excitement. I couldn't wait to share the news with him.

The elevator took me straight to the underground parking, where I found the black

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Maybach at a glance.

Bryant leaned against the car, waiting for me.

I rushed into his arms, inhaling his unique scent of woody freshness. "Honey! Have you been waiting long?"

"It's okay." He didn't embrace me as usual but seemed uncomfortable and stepped back. "Let's get in the car first."

"Wait, let me tell you what the surprise is first." held onto him.

"What is it?" Bryant looked less fired up than he was back at the office, like something was on his mind.

I frowned but didn't overthink it.

Looking into Bryant's began, tsiya deep eyes! "Bryant, you're going to be a..."

"Bry, why aren't you guys getting in the car yet?"

From my angle, I locked eyes with Margaret, sitting inside.

Stunned, I looked toward Bryant, waiting for an explanation.

But Margaret spoke first, in her gentle voice, "Jane, I sent my car for maintenance, and since we were all heading to the Ferguson Mansion, I asked Bry to give me a ride. You wouldn't mind such a small thing, right?"

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Knowing Bryant was waiting for me, the last thing I expected was to find someone else in the passenger seat, especially someone who was supposed to hitch a ride, Margaret, sitting there as if she belonged..

I was on the verge of turning around and Bryant with an outstretched hand. "Kaving, but reason held me back. I approached Without a word, Bryant handed them over.

I circled the front of the car and slid into the driver's seat, catching Margaret's stiff and surprised expression. I couldn't help but smirk. "What's the big deal? You're practically Bryant's sister. Hitching a ride is the least of our worries."

Then, leaning over to glance at Bryant still outside, I called, "Come on, get in. Timothy must be waiting."

The drive was eerily silent like we were trapped in a tomb.

Margaret tried to strike up a conversation with Bryant but gave up, probably because it was awkward to turn back constantly.

Sensing my discomfort, Bryant suddenly handed me a bottle. "Mango juice, your favorite."

I took a sip, grimaced, and handed it back. "Too sweet for me. You have it."

Lately, I'd been craving sour flavors, a departure from my past self who'd eat anything not to waste it.

"Okay," Bryant accepted it back, no further questions asked.

Margaret couldn't help but comment, her tone laced with complexity. "Passing back a drink you've sipped? You know, that's not very clean. You could spread all sorts of bacteria that way."

I laughed off her concern. "By that logic, we're in even more danger sleeping in the same bed every night, aren't we?"

Margaret knew what I was implying and retorted, "I didn't realize you two were still so close, even after all these years."

"Jealous much?" Bryant shot back in a cold voice.

There it was, the usual banter between them. Margaret snarked back, "Jealous? Why would I be?"

"Who cares" Bryant retorted.

Margaret rolled her eyes but managed a smile. It reminds me of someone who, on his wedding night, heard I was in trouble and left his bride to stay with me all night..."

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"Margaret!" Bryant's face darkened, and he sharply cut her off.

I slammed on the brakes, barely stopping before the crosswalk, my heart sour like soaked in lemon juice.

The hurt and confusion flooded in, tinged with the bitter realization of Bryant's absence on our wedding night, a night he had vanished after a mysterious phone call, leaving me.. alone and unexplained.

Arranged by Timothy, Bryant's grandfather, our marriage had begun on rocky grounds, with many questions left unanswered.

And at that moment, Margaret's offhand comment had reopened that wound deeper than before.

I looked between them, feeling like the butt of a joke.

Margaret covered her mouth in panic, looking at Bryant. "You never told Jane? My bad, I always speak before I think It was as if she was implying, your bond can't be that strong if you're hiding things like this from each other.

"Are you out of your mind?" Bryant's voice was a chilling calm, a stark contrast to his usually imposing LO demeanor, one that had helped him rise to the top of the Ferguson Group at such a young age.

"Sorry, sorry, I didn't know it was a secret, Margaret quickly apologized, her tone somehow innocent and intimate.

The way she was comfortable around Bryant implied that she knew he wouldn't fight back.

My phone's ringtone cut through the tension.

I reached for my phone, glanced at the caller ID, and answered, trying to compose myself "Timothy."

"Jane, are you close? Don't make an old man wait," Timothy's voice was warm and concerned.

I was ready to leave them behind and walk away, but Timothy's kindness made me reconsider. "We're almost there. Timothy, it's windy today.

Please, don't wait outside."

Everyone believed Timothy Ferguson to be a stern and solitary figure, but to me, he was the grandfather I "EIT. wished I'd always had.

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Chapter 10

Chapter 10

As autumn crept in, the days grew shorter and the nights longer.

When the car rolled into the driveway of the Ferguson Mansion, dusk had already wrapped its arms around the estate.

Colored lamps hung around the house, setting a festive mood that seemed out of a storybook.

I parked the car and stepped out with my bag, leaving the world behind me.

I had warned him over the phone, yet Timothy, stubborn as ever, was waiting in the yard.

for us.

Over the phone, I could hide my feelings, but in person, Timothy saw right through me. "Did that-rascal give you trouble again?" Timothy's mustache twitched with concern, ready to jump to my defense.

"It's nothing." I didn't want to get him worried, so I pulled him inside. "It's chilly out here. Didn't the breeze give you a headache?"

Though I tried to cover for Bryant, Timothy's face darkened the moment he saw Bryant and Margaret step out of the car one after the other.

But with all family members there, Timothy held back his temper.

On the other hand, my father-in-law, Albert Ferguson, lit up seeing Margaret. "Bryant, I heard Margaret's working at the company now. You better look after her. That's only right by Teresa."

I could pretend not to hear that, focusing on my dinner.

Bryant glanced at me and said softly, "Yeah, I know."

"Jane, you too should help Bryant to ensure Margaret feels welcome."

It seemed like Albert brought it up again out of concern that someone at the company might not be fair to Margaret.

I sipped my apple cider, calmly responding, "Don't worry. Margaret is my boss now. If anything, I need her to look out for me."

That remark shifted the mood at the dinner table.

"Jane, I've told you. If you're not happy, I can step down from my position anytime," Margaret said, the picture of grace and understanding.

Next to her, I might have seemed a bit too aggressive.

Timothy slammed his cup down, upset, his words sharp. "Step down? That position was

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Chapter 10

Jane's, to begin with! Do you think you're entitled to it only because Bryant decided to play the hero? Unbelievable!"

"Grandpa..."

"Stop, don't 'grandpa' me. I can't bear it." Timothy stopped her.

I had heard others say that Timothy never truly accepted Margaret. He had fiercely opposed Teresa's entry into the family to begin with.

And because of that, the Ferguson family's fortune had been out of Albert's reach, with only a modest allowance to his name.

"Please, Dad, she's all alone in this... Why must you..." Albert started.

"Enough!" Timothy snapped.

I knew Timothy wasn't fond of Margaret, but it was the first time I'd seen him call her out in public:

Pale as a ghost, Margaret got up, flustered, "I shouldn't have come today. I'm sorry for ruining the mood."

As she ran out, Albert shot Bryant a look. "Aren't you going to go after her? She's just been through a divorce. If anything happens, can you live with yourself?"

I began to understand why Bryant allowed Margaret so much leeway.

Being constantly reminded that you owe someone, the guilt could become a cage.

As Timothy tried to stop him, Bryant had already left to chase after Margaret.

Watching his retreating, I sighed silently.

After a while, with neither of them returning, I stood up, "Timothy, I'll go check on Bryant
"All right." Timothy nodded instructing the butler, "It's cold out. Get Mrs. Ferguson a co
Stepping outside, I saw the Maybach still parked there, so I headed toward the gate.
Just as I stepped out, I heard a heated argument.

"What are you trying to do? Don't tell me you brought that up in the the car just because
you a straight-shooter!"

Bryant's tone was harsh, the side of him I'd only seen at work.

Margaret dropped her usual calm demeanor, tears streaming down her face as she
looked at Bryant. "It's because I'm jealous, okay? I couldn't help it. I'm dying of
jealousy."

"Margaret, Jane is my wife. What right do you have to be jealous?" Bryant's laugh was
cold, his voice sharper than ice.

"I'm sorry..." Margaret sobbed, her shoulders trembling. "I divorced for you, Bry.

You know that."

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