

Lost Me, Gained Regret (Jane and Bryant Ferguson)

Chapter 201

I froze, finding Bryant both pitiful and detestable.

I couldn't tell if his emotions were genuine or just for show. And I didn't want to bother figuring it out. After all, it wouldn't be long before Bryant and I had nothing to do with each other.

I sniffled, forcibly waking Bryant up. "Take your medicine before you go back to sleep."

Knowing it was me, he didn't resist when I brought the medicine to his lips. Instead, he cooperated and obediently fell back asleep.

His fever was scorching, not something that would subside soon.

I asked Gary for some burn ointment and applied it to the burns on the inside of Bryant's wrist. I didn't return to my room until his fever started going down.

Thanks to Bryant's generally good health and youth, Gary came the following morning to report that Bryant's fever had broken.

However, by the afternoon, a servant delivered several couture dresses. "Mr. Bryant wants you to accompany him to a gala tonight."

"A gala?" I was perplexed.

In our three years of marriage, since it was kept a secret, he had never taken me to any events outside of Ferguson family gatherings, always attending alone. Gary nodded.

"Yes, it's Gladys Larson's 80th birthday celebration."

It was as if I suddenly understood his intention of presenting me as a married woman in front of the Larson family, cutting off any thoughts I might have of marrying Mark. How ridiculous. Bryant seemed more reasonable when he was sick.

I frowned. "Where is Bryant?"

"In the study..." Before Gary could finish, I had stormed off, pushing open the study door. "Bryant, are you out of your mind? I told you, there's nothing between me and him..."

I stopped mid-sentence, my face turning red as if someone had choked me.

He was in the middle of a video conference! Even though I was right, facing Bryant's mocking brown eyes made me lose my steam. How embarrassing.

"Ah, Jane, right? Nice to meet you!" A voice from the computer screen greeted me cheerfully. "Jane, are you trying to cuckold Bryant? If so, you're the coolest person in my book."

I could have walked away immediately but was stuck, trying to save face. "No, no, carry on with your meeting."

"Get lost." Bryant's voice was cold, and I thought he meant me, but he just hung up the video call and approached me. "So angry about going to the Larson's gala?"

"I think it's unnecessary." I looked up at him. "Bryant, don't think so lowly of me. People have a grace period after breaking up, let alone divorce. I'm not you. You don't need to be so defensive around me." "Jane," He eyed me, a smirk on his lips. "Haven't you noticed? You don't think too highly of me, either."

"What other reason could there be for you taking me to the gala?" I said coldly.

His gaze deepened. "To show you why I've been telling you to stay away from Mark."

I retorted, "He's better than you, at least."

Mark had never hurt me and had helped me repeatedly.

But my words seemed to hit a nerve. Bryant laughed coldly and sneered, "Defending him even before we're divorced? I've told you he's no good, but you won't keep your distance?"

"And what about you?" My anger flared. "Did you believe what I told you? And why do you get to slander Mark? Why should I stay away from him when Margaret is the one who harmed my child, and yet you haven't kept your distance from her!"

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"Slander him?" The rage sparked in his eyes as his face twisted into a scowl.

Seeing him flare up for nothing serious, I suddenly felt relieved. "Isn't that what you said, Bryant? That we should always have evidence."

With that, I turned and walked toward my room.

Behind me, Bryant was barely holding back his rage, sparing only a terse reply, "Six o'clock."

"Got it!" I didn't even look back.

My agreement wasn't for him but for Mark. I remembered how badly Mark got treated at the family chapel and suddenly wanted to be there for him tonight in case Violet tried to embarrass him again. It was my turn to have his back, especially with Mrs. Ferguson's influential name at my disposal. Why waste it?

After showering and getting ready, I applied some makeup.

For an occasion like this, simplicity and elegance were key. I opted for a tight black dress embroidered at the hems and knee-length, showing off my slender legs.

At six o'clock on the dot, in my lambskin heels, I was ready downstairs.

Hearing me, Bryant looked up. A glint of admiration passed through his eyes as he stood up, "Let's go."

I agreed, "Okay."

Having parked the car at the front, the driver hurried to open the door for us.

I got in first, sliding to the far side, and turned to look out the window. Silence filled the ride.

Bryant handed me a jewelry box as we neared the Larson Mansion. "For you."

I opened it to find an emerald necklace inside, obviously expensive and a perfect match for my dress.

Without any fuss, I removed the necklace on my neck and tried to put the new one on. But, struggling to clasp it without seeing, I fumbled several times.

Suddenly, a pair of large, dry hands took the necklace from me, fastening it behind my neck and sending shivers down my spine.

I couldn't help but ask, "Done yet?"

He answered, "Done."

As I finished speaking, Bryant let go, and the emerald pendant gently rested against my collarbone.

I glimpsed his wrist and inadvertently glanced sideways as Bryant withdrew his hands. He casually adjusted his shirt sleeve, covering the wound.

I asked, "Does it hurt?"

Bryant smirked, seemingly unconcerned. "Not really."

As we spoke, the car slowly stopped outside the Larson Mansion. Violet was greeting guests at the entrance, and Mark stood aside, his tall figure emanating a chill, probably due to the outdoor temperature.

As I got off, our eyes met from a distance. Mark's coldness faded, replaced with a smile. I responded with my own, an unspoken understanding passing between us.

Witnessing the exchange, Bryant seemed amused, biting his lip before offering his arm, "Arm in arm."

I looked at him, indifferent. "No thanks. Stand on your own."

Why should I comply with his whims, hiding or revealing our relationship as he pleased?

I couldn't care less.

I was about to walk off when another car pulled up. Someone stepped out, bypassing me and hooking her arm around his. "Bry, I knew you were waiting for me."

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I didn't even need to turn around. Just by the sound, I knew it was Margaret.

Bryant discreetly pulled his arm away. "What brings you here?"

"Dad brought me along," Margaret's voice was as soft as a whisper, "He said I'd have to help you manage the Ferguson family in the future and thought it'd be good to get familiar with everyone."

I couldn't help but scoff at the irony inside, listening to Bryant's cold reply, "Then go find him. Why stick around me?"

"What's the matter? You hate me that bad?" Margaret feigned anger and quickly switched to a pleading tone. "Oh, come on, are you still upset about those photos from

the other day? I'm not even mad, and why are you holding a grudge? Besides, it was Jane who cheated on you, not me..."

"Margaret!" Bryant's voice snapped as if trying to shake her off.

Albert appeared out of nowhere, assuming the role of the patriarch, "I've seen some friends. I'm going to go over and say hi. Margaret's new to such an event. Keep an eye on her, okay? I don't want anyone bothering her."

I walked away, not catching Bryant's response. It didn't matter. What else could he do but agree? But he probably forgot it was also my first time at such a high-society banquet.

"Jane." I had just reached the entrance when Mark, having just finished a conversation, made a beeline for me.

He glanced down at my bare legs, offering a warm smile. "Let's go inside. It's cold out here."

"Okay." I nodded, and we stepped into the mansion, only for Violet to speak sourly, "So, you're the woman who's been troubling him? Not bad-looking, I must say. No wonder my 'son' couldn't keep away after all these years."

She mistook me for the girl Mark was interested in.

Frowning, I was about to speak when Mark cut in with a cold sharpness, "Blame where blame is due. Don't take it out on the innocent."

Violet straightened her fur shawl, raising an eyebrow. "What's the rush? I only said one thing, and you're already upset?"

Her attitude was less than pleasant, but it was a far cry from the disdain she showed Mark at the family chapel, where she had practically treated him like a dog.

Today, her restraint and wariness were evident.

Mark's tone remained even. "She's just a friend."

"Just a friend?" Violet was skeptical, clearly not convinced.

Helplessly, I clarified, "Violet, we are just friends."

Then, pointing toward Bryant, entangled with Margaret, I added, "See, I'm married."

She sized me up. "You're... Bryant's wife? The one he secretly married three years ago?"

"Don't believe me? Ask him yourself." My tone was indifferent. After speaking, I turned to Mark, rubbing my hands together, "Let's go inside. I'm freezing."

Behind me, Violet muttered, "Quite the interesting couple, cheating on each other?"

Hearing that, I couldn't help but laugh at the irony.

Mark glanced over. "Don't mind her."

"It's fine." I shook my head, "What did you do? Violet's treating you very differently from the other day."

Mark raised an eyebrow. "Want to know?"

"A bit." I always saw Mark as a gentleman, so I was surprised he could make Violet change her attitude overnight.

Mark smiled slightly. "I found evidence that she was responsible for my mother's death."

"What?" I was shocked, asking instinctively, "Even after all these years, there's still evidence left?"

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His eyes twinkled as he looked ahead, "Yeah."

I was confused. "Why not call the police then?"

"Idiot." Mark chuckled. "Do you think the old lady celebrating her 80th birthday today would agree to me calling the cops? Sometimes, there are other ways to achieve the same result." That statement was intriguingly profound.

Surprised, I turned to Mark and smiled. "Mark, you're different from the Mark I knew before."

"How so?" He paused, looking at me, "Or... do you not like this side of me?"

"No way!" I immediately protested, praising him, "You've become sharper and more clever than the Mark I remember. I'm really impressed by how thoroughly you think things out."

In a situation like ours, we had no one to rely on but ourselves, especially since he was deep in the treacherous waters of the Larson family. Not being thorough was a recipe for disaster.

He seemed momentarily stunned, his eyes lighting up. "Really?"

"Absolutely." I nodded earnestly.

Maybe it was just my imagination, but Mark seemed to have let out a silent sigh of relief, his tension easing considerably as if my question had made him nervous.

When entering the Larson family's banquet hall, I realized that the attendees weren't just the upper class of RiverCity but also some new faces.

Mark got me some food from the buffet, saying, "I need to step out for a bit. You relax here, and call me if you need anything."

"Sure." I smiled softly, accepting the plate of Western cuisine.

The banquet hall buzzed with activity, and typically blending into the background, I found the perfect spot to enjoy some quiet.

After eating, I headed to the restroom. When I returned, I saw Margaret cornered by a rich girl. Even a bitch like Margaret encountered a thorn now and then? I decided to stay back, observing from around the corner to avoid unnecessary drama.

The rich girl, wearing an outfit worth at least seven figures and in her early twenties, spoke with unwavering confidence, "Margaret, you're Bryant's wife, kept hidden for over three years, right?"

I was just there for the drama, but it still stung.

Unexpectedly, without hesitation and quite proudly, Margaret tilted her chin up. "Yes, that's me. What about it?"

Probably, Margaret wasn't used to these kinds of events, dressed to the nines in a V-neck gown that flaunted her figure and a high slit that offered glimpses of her thigh.

"Divorce him." The command was clear in the rich girl's tone.

Margaret's eyes widened. "What did you say?"

"I said, divorce him." The rich girl crossed her arms, presenting a check. "Fill in the amount yourself."

That was quite a bold move. I never thought Mrs. Ferguson would find herself in such a situation one day, with homewreckers showing up and offering me a check to leave though standing opposite the rich girl was Margaret, the impostor.

Fond of stirring trouble, Margaret looked genuinely puzzled and threatened. "What do you mean? You like Bry?"

The rich girl pondered and dismissed it. "You could say that. Anyway, he's mine to have."

Margaret spat out in anger, "How dare you step into someone's marriage so boldly? And saying you're determined to have him, have you no shame?"

I couldn't help but laugh at the absurdity of it all, my laughter breaking through my attempt to stay silent.

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A mistress confronting her successor-I felt like I was in a daytime drama, and all I could do was laugh at the sheer ridiculousness of it all.

Just as my laughter faded, a muffled snicker echoed from behind me. I spun around, my heart skipping a beat, only to meet the gaze of a man with a naughty smile and a leather jacket, leaning casually against the wall. "Mrs. Ferguson's taste in drama is... unique," he remarked, with a hint of mischief in his eyes.

Caught eavesdropping, I felt a twinge of guilt, but it quickly dissipated. "Aren't you doing the same?" I retorted.

The man smiled. "I didn't want to interrupt you."

"Well, you have now." Our banter was cut short as I scrutinized him. "And you are? How do you know me?"

"Gregory Ford." He straightened up, shedding his carefree demeanor as he introduced himself and then, with a nod, said, "Mrs. Ferguson, until we meet again."

Without another word, he walked away, only to grab Dorothy, the heiress with a penchant for trouble, by her ponytail. "Dorothy, with your kind of brains, not knowing the main player from the sideline, maybe try not being a mistress," he quipped with mean sarcasm.

Dorothy furrowed her brows in anger. "What do you mean, Greg?"

"If I hear that disgusting term from you again, I'm sending you back home tonight," Gregory warned before letting her go, casting a meaningful glance back at me as if he was about to reveal the truth to his "girl," but instead, he just smirked, "That's why you're called dumb."

I was surprised. A quick mental rundown of RiverCity's elite didn't place him anywhere, and there he was, dressed down and fitting in effortlessly at Gladys' 80th birthday bash.

Just then, my phone rang.

"Where are you?" Bryant's indifferent voice came through.

I smirked, "Ground floor, by the restroom. Just watched your 'mistress' and 'the other woman' showdown."

"What mistress? I'm coming to you!" Bryant's tone grew colder, and soon enough, he found me.

"I'm afraid you're too late. Your 'mistress' and 'the other woman' have just wrapped up. You missed the chance to defend your love," I commented, half in jest.

"Jane," he frowned, looking for something in my expression, only to see disappointment. "You don't care, do you?" His words stung, not because of him but because of the truth they carried. Three years of a marriage that was nothing but a facade, the times he left me for Margaret, the moment we lost our child, all those pains were mine alone to bear.

Hiding my feelings, I smiled. "We're getting divorced, Bryant. What's there to care about?"

He clenched his jaw. "You do know your place, don't you?"

With that, he took my arm. "Come, let's go and wish Gladys a happy birthday."

"Okay." It didn't matter much to me anymore. Playing the part for a little longer was no big deal.

Knowing Mark's trials in the Larson family, my birthday wishes for Gladys were perfunctory.

Noticing my mood, Bryant scoffed as we returned to the hall after presenting the birthday gift. "Feeling sorry for him because of his ordeal with the Larson family?"

"Can't I?" I shot back.

Perhaps it was the loss of our child, or maybe I had nothing left to lose, but I found myself caring less about the consequences of my actions.

His gaze turned icy. "He's set to marry Dorothy Myers. Do you think you stand a chance?"

"Dorothy?" The name rang a bell. My eyes scanned the crowd, landing on her. "You mean her?"

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Bryant was getting more annoyed by the second, his laughter tinged with sarcasm, "Oh, look who's suddenly so concerned!"

"Oh, no, that's not it." I couldn't help but chuckle, "The person who cornered Margaret today was her. Bryant, your knack for jumping from one marriage to the next without breaking a sweat is quite a feat." His brows furrowed deeply, "Impossible."

"It's true. Don't believe me? Ask Margaret." After that, I realized Margaret had been missing for quite a while. Scanning the hall, I noticed that my father-in-law, Albert, was nowhere to be seen.

A thought flashed through my mind, and I quickly made an excuse. "My stomach hurts. I need to use the restroom!"

With that, I clutched my stomach and hurried off toward the restroom.

The Larson Mansion was vast. After not hearing any sound in the restroom, I headed straight for the backyard. The upper floors were for the family only, and guests wouldn't go up there. They had either left or were somewhere outside.

The cold wind was biting, and everyone else was busy networking in the banquet hall, leaving the yard deserted.

I tiptoed, searching around. Soon, the absurdity of my thoughts hit me. No matter the circumstance, it was unthinkable for anyone to engage in such acts on someone else's property, especially during a celebration.

I heard a cat's meow as I was about to head back. Thinking someone had accidentally freed the family's cat, I intended to help return it. However, after a few steps, I faintly heard a man's heavy, rapid breathing from behind the dense foliage. "Easy, no one's going to come out here. I'll be quick, very quick."

It was Albert's voice.

The woman's voice was low, almost crying, "Dad! What are you doing? It's too risky here. I'm scared. If Bry finds out, it's over between us!"

I knew that voice all too well.

It was my first time eavesdropping on such an act, and my heart was racing. I nervously began recording with my phone while instinctively holding my breath.

"That's because you're dressed so temptingly today. Don't worry. No one's going to venture out in this cold. It adds to the thrill..."

As Albert spoke, he eagerly kissed her. "Can't you see? That young fool has no intention of divorcing. He's never going to marry you..."

"Hmm, ah..." Margaret moaned softly, torn between pushing him away and succumbing to her desires. "Then, what do we do? I only want to marry Bry. Dear Daddy, oh, please think of something, will you? Ah!" I couldn't believe my ears.

"Naughty girl, isn't your daddy making you feel good? Albert thrust harder, slapping her rear. "Face it. That bastard doesn't even want to touch you. You might as well give up now..."

'One, two, three...' I was still counting the seconds in my heart when I saw Albert suddenly holding Margaret still.

...

That was pretty quick. No lies there.

I caught Margaret's look of disdain, Albert's moment of lustful impulsiveness, and his instant return to sense post-climax. "Let's discuss it at home. I haven't even wished Gladys a happy birthday yet. Let's go back inside."

"Wait for me!" Margaret glared at him, annoyed, hastily pulling up her thong and straightening her dress.

I had no time to escape and could only hide behind a centuries-old tree, holding my breath.

Fortunately, the dim lighting and cold temperature worked in my favor, and Margaret followed Albert back inside, grumbling.

I heard the door close and started breathing heavily, patting my chest. Even though I wasn't the one with a guilty conscience, I felt as if I had just done something wrong.

"Mrs. Ferguson has quite the taste. Only goes for the real deal in adult entertainment."

A casual voice came from behind another tree, and I realized I wasn't alone!

He had no sense of guilt about spying on others and even flashed me a smile. "You were recording, huh? For a little trip down memory lane?"

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The playful tone in his voice was obvious.

Under the flickering shadows, Gregory leaned casually against a tree, his cropped hair tousled across his forehead, the corners of his eyes curved upwards, embodying a spirit of wild and carefree abandon. It seemed lost on him how inappropriate it was to say such a thing to someone he had met moments ago.

In the biting chill of the evening, I wondered what brought him out into the yard.

I pocketed my phone, slightly on guard. "What brings you out here?"

"Don't worry. I wasn't following you." Gregory spoke with a lazy drawl, "It was too stuffy inside. I needed some fresh air. Little did I know RiverCity folks were so open."

I said, "It's just them."

Something about Gregory seemed complicated. He wasn't someone to get too involved with.

I pursed my lips and decided to be upfront. "Could you keep it to yourself for now?"

I needed this situation to work out in my favor. All would be for naught if Gregory spilled the beans.

"Sure." He agreed readily and quickly changed the subject, "What's in it for me?"

I frowned. "In it for you?"

Gregory was straightforward. "I'm a man of interests. Never do something without a little something in return."

The longer I lingered, the more likely it was for Margaret to notice my absence from the hall, possibly suspecting I'd been eavesdropping on their less-than-public affairs in the yard. Desperate to leave, I asked, "What do you want?"

"Haven't decided yet." He said, a smirk on his lips, "How about you owe me one? I'll let you know once I've decided."

"Fine." I agreed without a second thought.

After tonight, we might not even see each other again. Without evidence, who could hold whom accountable?

Finally, he straightened up, glancing at my thin black dress. "Aren't you cold?"

His question caught me off guard, and I replied almost reflexively, "A bit."

"You really can handle the cold." He said and zipped up his leather jacket tighter, seemingly to avoid suspicion. He didn't head back immediately. Instead, he walked off in a different direction. It made things easier for me, sparing me the need to wait before re-entering.

Inside, the warmth of the banquet hall enveloped me.

Mark approached with a smile. "Been looking for you."

"Are you done with your duties?" I asked, smiling back.

Today was the Larson family's big event, and he was the sole heir. He should've been too busy to care about anyone else.

He shook his head, a bit helpless. "Not yet. Just took a moment to check on you in case you needed something but were too shy to ask."

"Don't worry. I'll let you know if I need anything." I assured him, "Go on. Get back to your guests."

"Alright." He agreed and added, "I've got a gift for you. I'll give it to you after the party."

I was surprised. "Isn't Gladys' birthday today? And I'm getting a gift?"

He smiled slightly. "There's always a time for gifts. No occasion needed."

I smiled. "I'll accept it, but nothing too extravagant, please."

The dress last time was too much. But I couldn't be too picky at the time. Today wasn't any special day or birthday, so I had to set things straight beforehand.

Mark raised an eyebrow. "It might seem valuable, but it's merely returning to its rightful owner. Just accept it with peace of mind."

"Returning to its rightful owner?" I was about to ask more when an elder, a longtime friend of the Larson family, approached Mark to chat.

Not wanting to intrude, I shared a glance with him and discreetly moved away.

As the dinner concluded, I found a quiet spot away from the crowd, waiting for Mark to finish.

"Jane." While waiting, Bryant came over after greeting a business partner. "What are you doing here? Let's go."

I answered honestly, "Waiting for someone."

His sharp gaze fixed on me as he asked, "Who? Mark?"

I admitted, "Yes."

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His eyes turned ice cold instantly, his voice dropping to a warning whisper. "Jane, Your boldness continues to surprise me more and more. We're not divorced yet."

"I'm aware," I replied, lifting my head defiantly. "In a place as crowded as this, what could happen between Mark and me?"

"Come home with me!" His tone was as commanding as ever, his hand gripping mine, ready to drag me away.

I tried to pull free, only to hear him say, "He and Dorothy got called away by Gladys. Do you want to freeze out here?" Clearly, Mark wouldn't be showing up anytime soon. Reluctantly, I stopped struggling. After all, I had a crucial discussion pending with Bryant tonight.

"Let go. I can walk by myself," I insisted.

He ignored my protest, dragging me to the car.

A spark of anger flared within me. I quickly sent a message to Mark, informing him I had to leave early. Then, without waiting to get home, I pulled up a video and thrust my phone before Bryant. The car filled with the suggestive sounds from the video!

Probably thinking we were spicing up our evening with porn, the driver discreetly raised the privacy screen.

Bryant didn't look at the phone but stared at me instead. "You've started watching this sort of thing now?" he asked, a hint of amusement in his voice.

"Just keep watching," I urged, my arm growing tired, and I handed the phone to Bryant.

As the unmistakable voices of Albert and Margaret emanated from the device, Bryant's expression turned frosty.

The recorded conversation was utterly unsuitable for polite company, made all the worse because the speakers were his father and the woman he adored! Bryant gave me a chilling glance before fiddling with the screen.

"Deleting it won't help," I pointed out, having expected the move. "I've made backups."

The evidence I had so painstakingly gathered wasn't something I would lose through carelessness.

Yet, aside from the chill, I couldn't detect any additional emotion on his face.

He tossed the phone aside, his gaze deep and unreadable. "You delete it. It's an eyesore."

Turning to look at him, I tried to gauge his reaction. "Bryant, you're not mad?"

"What? Are you disappointed?" His voice was cold and detached. "Jane, I'm not a fool. I didn't need you to throw this evidence in my face."

My eyes widened in disbelief. "You knew about it already?"

"To some extent," he replied, his tone noncommittal.

I clicked my tongue in frustration. "Then you are quite pitiful, yet so tolerant."

He asked, "Tolerant of what?"

I blurt out, "Didn't you see who the woman in the video is? It's Margaret..."

"I'm not blind nor deaf." He looked at me as if I were foolish. "After my mother passed away, were his messy affairs anything new? If not Margaret, there would be another woman."

I was speechless. "But why then do you still protect Margaret?"

"To me, if it's not my mother, it makes no difference who Albert is with." When mentioning his mother, Bryant's expression softened slightly. "As for the rest, I've explained it to you before. It was merely a promise to Teresa. Besides, I didn't know much more about this situation than you did before."

He turned his gaze towards me, deep and unwavering. "Margaret's child was Albert's. They nearly gave me a little brother."

The last comment left me with nothing to say but, "This is one messed-up circle."

He seemed to have a plan in mind, pointing to my phone. "Delete the video. Pretend you don't know anything."

I almost let him distract me. Then, I remembered my original intention for the evening. "I'll delete it, but let's get that divorce certificate first."

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A quiet, mocking chuckle suddenly filled the air.

The air around Bryant was charged with an intense fury. His jaw clenched, his voice chillingly cold. "So, you went through all this trouble to take these photos just to blackmail me into a divorce?" I shot back, "What else?"

Or did he think there was any chance he'd see the error of his ways with Margaret and come crawling back to salvage our failed marriage?

That was just a fairy tale.

His fury swelled, teeth clenched, and he spat out, "Jane, are you sure you want a divorce?"

"Yes." I didn't hesitate for a second.

His face darkened. "And if I refuse?"

I stood my ground. "Then I'll bring the skeletons out of the closet."

Knowing Bryant's nature, I was sure he'd never let the affair get out.

It was more than embarrassing. It would rock the Ferguson Group's stock and cause a scandal.

It might be a minor domestic issue for some, but it was tabloid fodder for a family like ours.

Even the most prestigious families had their secrets, but it would be a different story once they were out in the open.

Bryant's temples throbbed, his hands balled into fists, veins popping, and through gritted teeth, he growled, "Get out."

I ignored his fury. "The sooner, the better."

His eyes bore into me as he said, "Leave!"

"Okay," I responded, stepping out of the car smoothly. Before I shut the door, I set the terms, "Mr. Ferguson, let's make it tomorrow. Otherwise, I might spill the beans someday if I'm in a bad mood." I swiftly closed the door right before his outburst, turning to leave!

A few steps away, I realized I'd forgotten my coat. It was cold. Turning back to grab it, the black Maybach had sped off into the distance.

Seeing that Mark hadn't replied to my text, knowing he was still busy, I found a sheltered spot and took out my phone to book a ride.

The party was still winding down, and as I waited, my gaze met Gregory's.

Gladys had personally seen him out.

Gregory had agreed to keep it a secret so readily back in the backyard, but then, having cooled off, I wasn't sure if he was serious. He always seemed so laid-back, like everything was just offhand remarks. He seemed to read my mind, managing Gladys while subtly signaling, "Trust, no doubt."

I hoped so.

Slightly reassured, I got into the car, and then Mark called.

"Jane, you home yet?" He sounded apologetic, "Got caught up in something and just saw your message."

"Almost there."

"Were you... with Bryant?"

"No." Even on the phone, I instinctively shook my head, "I took a cab."

He hesitated before finally saying, "Let me know when you get home safe."

He sounded more relaxed than before.

"Will do." I couldn't help asking, "Mark, why did you say the thing you're giving to me is 'returning to its rightful owner'?"

"Secret for now." His voice came with a smile, "I'll bring it over in a few days. You'll like it."

After returning to Riverview Estate, the weight of my conversation with Bryant in the car seemed to lift off my shoulders. It was the exact feeling of relief.

Just out of the shower, I was thinking about getting a burger. Christine suddenly appeared in my living room, lounging on the couch, looking dazed.

I handed her a glass of water. "Drank too much? Why didn't you call me for a ride?"

"I got a designated driver!" She grinned goofily at me, obediently sipping the water. "Jane, I want to stay here for a few days."

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"No problem." I nodded, giving her a skeptical glance. "Has Steven been bothering you?"

"Yep! Burp..." She sipped her water, belching slightly, her gaze unfocused, yet her thoughts seemed crystal clear. "He said he didn't want to split up and would ditch the arranged marriage for me."

I was stunned. "For real?"

"Are you daft?" Christine's fingers, adorned with an elegant manicure, poked my forehead, her clarity unshaken. "Whether it's true or not doesn't matter. Even if he wants that, do you think his folks would agree? His family might not be as posh as the Ferguson family, but still, a girl like me marrying him? Fat chance."

Christine continued, "No matter how passionate love is, can it stand up to his family's staunch opposition? And if I do marry him, how long before the happiness turns to bitterness? Only a fool would fall for that!"

After hearing her out, I pinched her cheek. "Had quite a bit to drink, yet your brain's still ticking, huh?"

She gave me a bittersweet smile. "That's why I drank so much."

That was too lucid. Christine didn't even allow herself the chance to sink into oblivion, to grasp a moment of fleeting happiness.

Christine rested her head on my lap, murmuring, "Cinderella ended up with the prince because she was born into nobility. But I'm just the Little Match Girl."

My heart ached for her. "Then I'll buy your matches with all my savings and make you rich."

After all, Bryant had given me plenty, enough to provide for Christine.

The next day, I woke without an alarm, freshened up, and headed to the kitchen to cook breakfast. I made a simple affair of milk with sandwiches.

Christine sat at the dining table, looking deflated, eyeing me with a shaky voice. "I feel you're in a good mood today."

"Feeling pretty decent." I set breakfast in front of her. "I've got an appointment with Bryant today to sort out our divorce papers."

"Today?" She yawned, piecing it together. "Weren't you guys in the cooling-off period till next month?"

I answered, "A call from Bryant can sort it out."

Christine frowned, "He's that eager, huh?"

"I was the one who suggested it." I smiled, sitting opposite her, took a sip of milk, and dropped the bombshell. "You were right about Albert and Margaret being an item." Christine was stunned, speechless. "For real? You caught them in the act?"

I smirked. "Yup."

She snatched my phone. "Did you take pictures? Show me!"

"Eye-watering stuff," I warned kindly.

Undeterred, she declared, "I've seen it all. It won't faze me."

After viewing, her verdict was succinct. "Wow, quite the quick shooter, huh?"

I nearly choked on my breakfast, shooting her a glare and urging her to eat up.

Post-breakfast, Christine offered to wash the dishes while I stepped out to the balcony, dialing Bryant.

He picked up immediately, silent, waiting for me to speak.

I pursed my lips. "When can you make it today? I'll be at the town hall waiting for you."

Crash! It sounded like a phone smashed, followed by a burst of static.

I clutched my palm, zoning out on the balcony for a bit before heading back inside when my phone rang again.

It was Kevin.

I answered, "Hello?"

"Mrs. Ferguson..." Kevin sounded unsettled. "Mr. Ferguson told me to inform you, 2 PM."

I took a deep breath. "Okay."

As the moment to officially divorce approached, I felt an uncanny sense of unreality.