

Chapter 2

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"Harley, don't be upset."

"I'm not upset," I replied with my eyes downcast.

After five years, my heart had already been broken beyond repair.

"Get someone to replace the door."

After visiting the hospital, I went straight home. The living room looked noticeably different, now cluttered with various new items.

My in-laws were seated on the couch while Jerome knelt at the doorway.

As soon as I entered, Jerome's mother, Lillian Gabler, hurried over to take my bag. "Harley, we've already given him a good scolding. You can do whatever you want with him now. We'll back you up."

As she spoke, she slapped Jerome's shoulder twice for good measure.

I glanced at Jerome. His head was hung low, and he looked nothing like the arrogant man who strutted around the office.

"Harley, I was wrong. Please forgive me," he said.

To be fair, when Jerome wasn't acting out, he was undeniably handsome. It was that face—a perfect blend of charm and deceit—that had blinded me back then.

I'd married him against better judgment as I was fooled by the façade of a gentleman.

Ignoring him, I walked past and headed for the kitchen to pour myself some water.

Lillian shot Jerome a look, urging him into action. "Let Jerry serve you."

Jerome hurriedly poured me a glass of water and then served me with eager hands.

However, I didn't take it right away. His grip on the glass tightened as the silence stretched, and his knuckles began turning white.

My in-laws watched me nervously, their expressions strained. I let my gaze linger on each of them, taking in their unease. Finally, I accepted the glass of water and downed it.

The tense atmosphere in the room instantly eased. Lillian beamed and pulled me to the couch.

"I knew you were the right one, Harley. You're kind, understanding, and forgiving!"

I stayed silent and listened as Lillian poured out every complimentary phrase she could think of, all variations of how generous and virtuous I supposedly was.

When she finally seemed satisfied, Jerome's father, Mike Maslow, cleared his throat, preparing to take a different approach.

"Harley, Jerry was wrong, there's no question about that. But I need to say something to you as well."

He paused dramatically, taking a sip of tea for effect before his tone turned stern. "No matter how wrong he was, you shouldn't have aired family matters in the group chat. It's just not right!"

Mike's face flushed red as if he were personally devastated by my actions. Meanwhile, Lillian, ever the performer, jumped back in seamlessly.

"Harley, just apologize and we'll put this behind us."

I nearly laughed out loud.

Jerome cheated, yet somehow, after all their maneuvering, I owed them an apology.

At that moment, a fleeting memory hit me.

Over the years, no matter what happened, I was always the one who ended up apologizing. They always managed to twist the situation and squeeze something out of Dad for Jerome's benefit.

I looked down and forced back the tears in my eyes.

"Wasn't it just last month that Uncle Sam came to borrow money? And last year, Aunt Megan asked for help with her kid's school expenses. Even the year before that..."

"Every time, you told me they were family, so we should help. I thought since we're family, they should be informed of something this big."

Lillian was speechless for a moment before she hastily changed the subject. "Oh, that—that was just small talk, dear. You took it too seriously. Anyway, let's not dwell on that now."

"Harley, I've talked this over with Mike. For your sake, that girl has to go. But the baby must stay for you to raise."

I stared at her, stunned.

Every time I thought this family had hit rock bottom, they found a way to sink even lower.

Noticing my darkening expression, Lillian quickly added, "Don't worry, Harley. We're not suggesting she move in with us. Absolutely not."