

## Chapter 3

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Lillian explained, "We just thought since you're unable to get pregnant, why not keep the baby instead of adopting in the future?"

"As for that woman, we'll give her some money, and she'll leave quietly. Then, you can raise the baby as your own and be his mother."

Mike chimed in with a stern face, "Either way, our family cannot end without an heir!"

My head buzzed, my stomach churned, and I felt on the verge of throwing up.

How had I ended up tied to a family like this?

I looked at Jerome—the man I'd chosen in my youth and defied Dad to be with.

Five years had passed. His looks were as polished as ever, but time had added an air of worldliness or perhaps just cunning.

"Jerome," I asked, "what about you? What do you think?"

Five years ago, when we first got our premarital check-up results, I had asked him a similar question. "If we might not have kids in the future, will you change your mind about marrying me?"

Jerome had answered without hesitation, "I love you. Kids would only get in our way."

I had laughed. "What if your parents want grandkids?"

He had pulled me into his arms and said, "Then I'll just act like their grandkid."

The confidence in his tone back then was strong, and now, he was acting like a kid, quite literally.

Jerome looked at me with guilt in his eyes. "Harley... Mom and Dad are getting older. They only wish for a grandchild. Let's... let's go along with it, okay?"

Even now, he was avoiding the truth and hiding behind his parents' wishes, refusing to admit his selfishness and cowardice.

Disgusted by his hypocrisy, I felt the nausea in my chest swell.

My voice rose. "I'm asking what you think!"

"I..."

Jerome hesitated, but I forced him to meet my gaze. When he saw the disappointment and contempt in my eyes, he seemed to falter as though I'd struck a nerve.

His face flushed red, and under my unwavering stare, he stammered before finally breaking. "Harley, don't be like this. Let's go back to how we used to be—"

I cut him off coldly. "You mean when you had a string of mistresses but no illegitimate child?"

My words lit Jerome's fuse. He shot to his feet, waving his arms as though trying to mask his guilt.

"Fine! I admit cheating was my fault. But don't you have any blame for this? What woman can't have children? And now you're dragging me into your mess? Harley, can't you stop being so selfish?"

Even though I'd prepared myself, his words still hit me hard.

So this was how he truly felt.

For five years, he had never yelled at me or lost his composure. Now, for the first time, he had dropped the mask.

"So, this is what you've been thinking all along."

My face must have looked terrible because Lillian rushed in to mediate.

"Jerome! How can you say that to Harley? Harley, this is such a big deal. He wasn't thinking straight when he said that. Don't take it to heart..."

Upon realizing his outburst had crossed the line, Jerome returned to a panic state. He crouched down in front of me and grabbed my hands with trembling fingers.

"Harley, I didn't mean that! If you think about it, the baby is related to you too. Didn't you always say you liked children? Harley, I love you. I really can't live without you."

I felt nothing. My heart was dead.

I uttered emotionlessly, "If that girl agrees, I won't object. After all, your family needs an heir."

The next day, Jerome was to talk to Audrey at the company. Meanwhile, I made an appointment at the hospital for a full check-up.

Early in the morning, Jerome drove me to the hospital first. As always, he opened the car door for me and shielded my head with his hand.