

Chapter 4

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As I was about to step into the hospital, Jerome grabbed my hand.

His voice brimmed with the same tenderness he'd had five years ago. "Harley, why put yourself through this? We did all the tests back then. I don't want you to feel sad all over again."

"Let go!"

The sensation of his hand on mine made my skin crawl. Reflexively, I pulled away and took out a disinfectant wipe.

Jerome didn't seem offended. Instead, he even reached out to take the used wipe from me. "Do you really not want me to stay with you?"

I dodged his hand and tossed the wipe into the trash. "Finish your own business first."

"I'll wait for you at the office then," he said, walking me to the waiting area outside the examination room.

After I sat down, Jerome handed me a bag filled with everyday essentials and turned to leave. Before walking away, he lifted his hand to pat my head.

When I dodged him, he smiled to himself, a self-deprecating twist of his lips.

Five years ago, I thought he was deeply affectionate. Now, I saw it as nothing more than well-practiced theatrics.

I watched his retreating figure and was suddenly reminded of our wedding day when he had walked toward me. The tenderness back then felt like a dream, fleeting and unreal.

I didn't feel sad, only a tinge of regret.

After completing the check-up, I returned to the office.

The moment I walked through the door, Audrey rushed toward me and clutched my arm. She was shaking, and she looked ready to kneel.

"Harley, I was wrong. I don't want money. Please don't take my baby. I'm begging you! I shouldn't have come between your marriage. I'll leave. I'll disappear—"

"Calm down," I said as I helped her stay upright. Over her shoulder, I spotted Jerome stepping out of his office, his face dark as thunder.

Jerome walked up to us, forcing a polite smile that barely held together his composure. Gripping Audrey's arm tightly with one hand, he bellowed, "Don't get greedy!"

Although the employees didn't dare openly watch the spectacle, I could feel their furtive glances darting our way. I frowned and pried Jerome's hand off Audrey.

"Not here. Don't make a scene out here. Let's take this to the office."

Audrey tried to resist, but I patted her arm soothingly. "Be careful—you're pregnant."

Once inside the office, I closed the door and guided Audrey to the couch, forcing her to sit. Before I could say anything, Jerome spoke first.

"Harley, don't worry. I'll take care of everything."

What did that even mean?

I turned to face Jerome and questioned, "And what exactly does 'take care of everything' mean? Are you going to threaten her or bribe her to force her to give up the baby?"

"I—" Jerome faltered. He glanced at Audrey and said sullenly, "I've already offered her a generous sum, but she's being greedy!"

Seemingly petrified by Jerome's outburst, Audrey clutched at my sleeve. "Harley, I don't want the money. I really don't want it!"

I smirked at Jerome, my voice dripping with sarcasm. "See that? She doesn't want money. And you're still thinking of taking her baby?"

"Shut up!" Jerome raised his hand at Audrey.

I caught his wrist mid-air and slapped him across the face.

"You shut up! She's pregnant, and you'd still lay a hand on her? You disgust me, Jerome!"

"Harley, I—"

Jerome held his cheek, stammering as if to explain, but I cut him off.

"Get out. I want to speak with Audrey alone."

Jerome refused to move. His gaze lingered on Audrey's abdomen, and his face was twisted with uncertainty. Realization dawned on me like a bitter slap.

He was afraid I'd harm the baby she was carrying.

The thought was so absurd I laughed.

"Jerome, when you needed money to start a business and begged me to ask my dad for it, you said you trusted me. When the company hit a bottleneck and you asked me to plead with my dad for help, you also said you trusted me.

"We've been married for five years. What kind of person do you think I am?"
