

Chapter 5

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"I thought that even if our marriage was over, at the very least, you'd still see me as a decent person."

Jerome opened his mouth but didn't make a sound.

I decided to follow his train of thought and continued, "Even if I were to make her lose the baby right here and now, do you think you could stop me?"

He fell silent, and under Audrey's panicked gaze, he left in disgrace.

I took a moment to collect myself. Then, I made sure the doors and windows were securely closed before turning back to Audrey.

I softened my tone and said, "Audrey, the baby you're carrying... it's not Jerome's, is it?"

Five years ago, Jerome had just graduated from college, broke and struggling. I had to plead with Dad for months before he finally agreed to let me marry him.

But during our premarital health checks, Jerome was diagnosed with azoospermia. He would never be able to have children.

I was fine with not having kids, but Dad was a traditionalist. If he had known, he would have stopped us from getting married. So, I had forged the medical report and told everyone I was the infertile one.

At the time, Jerome hadn't seemed upset. On the contrary, he had immediately promised me a lifetime of devotion and said children didn't matter. Being with me was all he ever wanted.

He'd even somehow persuaded his parents to accept me, ensuring I wasn't treated unfairly. From that point on, Dad had fully embraced him and supported him to rise quickly in his career.

For a while, I secretly felt fortunate to have his unwavering love. Nevertheless, I never expected he had harbored so much resentment all along.

What was he actually thinking when he made that promise back then?

Was he truly indifferent, or was he just glad he could exploit my guilt? And how much of his supposed love was genuine, and how much of it was calculated?

Audrey's face turned ghostly pale at my question. She stammered, "What? No, it's not that..."

I sighed and laid out the truth.

"It's not me who's infertile—it's Jerome. He has azoospermia. He's cheated on me more than once over the years, and frankly, you giving him this kind of humiliation suits me just fine."

Audrey looked as if she might collapse. I quickly steadied her.

"So rest assured, I won't harm you or your baby."

Her frantic expression made me sigh again. "With such a timid nature, how did you dare to tell such a big lie? Did you even think about how you'd deal with it?"

Audrey finally broke down and sobbed uncontrollably. "Harley, I-I don't even know who the father is."

"What do you mean?"

A sense of unease gripped me. I frowned, waiting for her explanation.

Audrey hesitated, glancing at me cautiously before speaking. "My mom accepted 10,000 dollars and married me off to a lame man from the neighboring village. I ran away the day after the wedding.

"I had no money, so when I saw a job posting from your company, I applied. On my first day at work, I met Mr. Maslow. He said he'd throw me a celebration dinner that evening, and then... then he got me drunk."

Audrey clutched at my sleeve and cried. "Harley, it only happened that one time. After that, I avoided Mr. Maslow whenever I could. But he has recorded a video of what he did. I'm terrified of losing this job.

"When he found my pregnancy test, he said he'd take responsibility. I... I wasn't thinking clearly. I just... thought the baby needed a father. Harley, I know it was wrong. I'll leave. I swear I'll leave..."

The revelation was shocking. I instinctively glanced at the office door to ensure it was firmly shut. My thoughts were a chaotic mess.

In the past five years, I'd caught Jerome cheating five times. Every time, he'd clean up the situation quietly, and I pretended not to know to maintain the façade of our marriage.

Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine the truth would be this horrific.

After confirming Jerome couldn't possibly overhear us, I turned back to Audrey. Taking in her innocent, delicate face, I hugged her tightly and cursed, "Devil. He's a freaking devil!"

Audrey was only 18. I couldn't fathom how frightened she must have been.

Once Audrey's sobs had subsided, I made up my mind. I patted her back and asked, "Audrey, do you want to keep the baby?"

Audrey tensed up again at my question.

I quickly reassured her. "I don't mean anything by it. I just want you to think carefully. You're still very young, and there are many paths ahead of you."

Audrey paused for a long time before lowering her head.

"I want to keep the baby. When I was little, my dad used to get drunk and beat me. Every time he hit me, I'd think about how I'd have a child of my own someday. I'd give them the best life possible, and they'd be my real family."

"Alright. I respect your decision." I nodded. "I also want you to think carefully. Does your child need a father? And even if they do, do you want their father to be someone like Jerome?"

This time, Audrey answered without hesitation, "I've already made up my mind. I can raise the child on my own. I don't want any ties to Mr. Maslow."

I said, "Okay. One more thing. Do you want Jerome to face justice for what he's done? I'm willing to help you break free from him and make him pay legally. I'll also make sure you don't lose your job or your source of income."

Seeing the hope ignite in Audrey's eyes, I nodded in satisfaction and added, "But whether or not this works depends on what you're willing to do."

"What do you need me to do?" Audrey asked.

"You need to tell Jerome that if he wants the child, he can't leave you. Then..."