

Chapter 3 Signs Of Miscarriage

Alexia stared at the filing receipt, surprised.

She and Millie had been close friends for more than ten years, and in all that time, Alexia had seen just how hard Millie loved Brandon.

There was a time Millie could have died for him, and nobody would have questioned it.

They got married a year ago. Alexia had smiled at the wedding, even though something about their pairing felt off. But still, Millie had gotten what she wanted. That had been enough for Alexia.

Now this...

What had happened?

"I don't love him anymore," Millie said, before Alexia could ask.

She looked over and gave a small, calm smile.

In that smile, Alexia caught a glimpse of the old Millie—the one from before everything collapsed, before grief carved deep lines into her, before her father's death and the fall of the Bennett family changed her.

It brought Alexia a strange sense of calm.

"Brandon doesn't know I'm pregnant," Millie said calmly. "And before the divorce becomes final, I don't want to take any risks. It's better if he doesn't know."

If either party changed their mind before the divorce was finalized, they could take back the application, and the procedure would no longer go through.

And that was when Alexia knew that Millie wasn't playing around about

divorcing Brandon.

After taking it all in, Alexia did what needed to be done: she booked Millie's medical tests and then advised carefully, 'Wait a few days before the surgery.'

Millie frowned in confusion. 'Why?'

'You know your blood type—Rh-negative. It's rare. We need time to prepare blood, just in case. I've already contacted the blood bank. They said it might take a week.'

Millie went quiet. The sadness in her eyes was unmistakable.

She had gotten that blood type from her father. And now she missed him all over again.

If he were still here...

'Okay,' Millie nodded slowly. A smile tugged at her lips, but her eyes turned red.

'You also have early signs of miscarriage. You need to be careful these next few days,' Alexia added, her voice full of concern.

They'd grown up together, and Alexia knew Millie's sadness too well.

She held Millie's hand. 'Wait for me. My shift's almost over. I'll go home with you.'

Millie nodded, and then went to wait in the hallway.

She looked down at her stomach.

Early signs of miscarriage.

Did the baby know what she'd decided and want to leave first?

Pursing her lips, Millie walked toward the lab for the tests.

Her phone buzzed. It was a bank notification.

She had opened a new account—one that Brandon wouldn't know about. She was keeping her money cleanly separate before the divorce was finalized.

Every cent she earned from now on would live in that account.

A second message followed. "Payment for composition and lyrics has been completed. Finance has sent the transfer. Kindly confirm."

Before she married Brandon, Millie had worked quietly as an anonymous songwriter.

Music had always been her first love. Back when her father was alive, life had been generous, and she lacked nothing. As the Bennett family's only daughter, she had the freedom and the means to grow her gift.

The turns her life had taken had taught her things she hadn't known she needed to learn.

Maybe her father never thought that the pastime he once encouraged would one day be the very thing keeping her afloat.

Millie paused, and then typed back, "Money received. Thank you."

The reply came quickly. "It's what you deserve. You've written a lot of hits over the years. Why don't you return? There's a new show coming up. It fits you perfectly. I've sent details to your email. Reserved a contestant slot just for you."

Millie opened her email. A new message sat at the top, inviting her to join a music competition show. The format was familiar, like others she had seen before, but this one wanted something original.

She typed out a quick reply. "I'll think about it."

Then she set her phone down. A light cramp curled in her lower belly.

She thought of her father again.

The second time today.

...

Meanwhile, the Internet was buzzing with updates.

#VivianSimpsonStomachCancer

#FloristVivianSimpsonCountdown

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#LastSixMonths

The most trending post was a video featuring a reporter summarizing the news about Vivian. "Sources confirm that the well-known floral designer, Vivian Simpson, has been diagnosed with stomach cancer. She's been given six months to live. But instead of retreating, she's choosing to document her remaining time—she wants to share her life with the world as it winds down."

The video cut to Vivian. She looked at the camera with a sad smile. "In these last six months, I'll be posting updates about my life. I'm not doing it for attention. I just want to offer some comfort to others going through the same thing. I hope you all stay strong."

Then the reporter came back on screen. "There have long been whispers about Miss Simpson and Mr. Brandon Watson, CEO of Watson Group. But Mr. Watson is married. It remains to be seen if he'll reconnect with Miss Simpson during her final months."

In the background, Vivian seemed to have heard that part. She stepped forward, stopped beside the reporter, and gently cut in.

She faced the camera.

"I'm not ashamed to say I like Brandon. He's an incredible man," she said. "I'm sure I'm not the only one who feels that way. But I want to make it clear—I'm not going to break up someone's marriage. That's not who I am."

Having said that, she walked off, leaving the reporter behind.

She wove through the small crowd with a smile and climbed into a waiting car.

The foreign caregiver from Flaville passed her a glass of water, hand paused in midair, unsure.

"You look like you want to say something," Vivian said, her voice cold. "Go ahead. The driver's one of ours."

The caregiver leaned in and lowered their voice. "Miss Simpson, your diagnosis... it's a stomach ulcer. Having our facility change that into cancer is already risky. But now you're sharing it with the public online?"

Vivian gave a sharp laugh, startling the caregiver.

"Your facility—is it a licensed medical facility?" she asked.

The caregiver nodded.

"And does it manage my medical record privately?"

The caregiver gave another nod.

"Is that what my medical record says—that I have six months left because of terminal stomach cancer?"

The caregiver hesitated before nodding again.

"Exactly!" Vivian leaned back with a smile. "It's official, then. No one can question it."

"But you don't actually have stomach cancer. What happens later..."

"There are two ways out," Vivian said, cutting in. Her voice was sharper now, her eyes harder. "One: I make a miraculous recovery during treatment at your facility or somewhere else, maybe because of all the love I've received. Two: your facility gets blamed for a diagnostic error and months of wrong treatment."

She turned her face fully to the caregiver, looking more intimidating. "Which option do you prefer?"

The caregiver looked panicked but forced out the words. "I'm sorry, Miss Simpson. I understand. You've already thought everything through."

Vivian gave a short, cold smile.

"Where should we go next, Miss Simpson?" the caregiver asked in an attempt to lighten the mood.

Vivian glanced at her phone. "Crobert Hospital."

The caregiver stiffened. "But—"

"Relax. I'm only going in for pain relief with my medical record," Vivian said, and then reached for her phone and sent Brandon a message, telling him to meet her at the hospital later.

Almost instantly, he replied, "Sure."

Meanwhile, Millie stood in the hospital restroom, a steady ache pulling at her lower stomach. In her hand was a tissue, the smear of blood clear against the white.

It was an early sign of a miscarriage.

