

## Chapter 2

Serena Whitfield and Sean were lying on a bed in the home goods section, their bodies close together.

Serena leaned toward Sean, whispered something in his ear, and the two exchanged a smile, the atmosphere unmistakably intimate. They looked every bit like a happy couple shopping for furniture for their cozy home.

Just then, my sister walked over with a duvet cover in her hands, asking me to pick a design. When she saw the scene, she instinctively wanted to march over and confront them, but I stopped her.

"I'll like whatever you pick," I said, handing her a small planter. "I don't have much to give you, but these are my cherished succulents. I've been taking care of them for years, and they can't be transported by plane. Take good care of them for me, okay?"

I took my sister's arm and walked past Sean as if I hadn't seen him.

But for once, he felt the need to explain.

"Gina, don't get the wrong idea. I was just helping Serena test if the bed was comfortable," Sean said, pausing before adding, "Her ex-husband found out where she's staying, and it's not safe for her. I figured she could stay at my place since the apartment is empty. The furniture there is old, so I came along to help her pick out a few new pieces.

"You know how hard it is for her to move these things on her own. Are you here visiting your sister? And what's with the succulents? Aren't they your prized possessions? You never even let me touch them before."

"It's your apartment. You can arrange it however you like; you don't need to explain it to me. As for the bed, it's true you need to try it out to make sure it's comfortable. Go ahead, don't mind us."

Seeing that I wasn't questioning him, Sean seemed relieved.

After wandering around for a while, my sister and I left the mall with our arms full of purchases.

When we got back to her apartment complex, we ran into Sean and Serena again. They were carrying newly bought household items and heading inside together. Sean took all the bags from Serena's hands, gently blowing on her pale, delicate palms with concern in his eyes.

When Serena mentioned she was hungry, Sean immediately put his arm around her and led her inside. I stepped aside to let them pass, opened the door to the building, and pressed the elevator button.

As the elevator doors slid shut, Sean's worried voice reached me. He was fussing over Serena, asking if she felt alright, if her blood sugar was low, and promising to make her favorite fried chicken wings as soon as they got home.

It felt like I was looking at a reflection of us in the past.

Back then, I'd gotten a stomach issue from dieting too much and skipping meals. After accompanying me to the hospital once, Sean started making sure I ate properly. Whenever I mentioned being hungry, he'd worry just like this.

He even researched recipes for a healthy diet and insisted on cooking himself, saying that if I saw the effort he put into it, I wouldn't have the heart to waste his hard work and would eat obediently.

I loved standing by the kitchen, watching him cook. Under the warm glow of the kitchen lights, surrounded by the aroma of food, it felt like happiness itself. He'd affectionately call me his little foodie and joke that he was learning to cook to take care of his future wife.

Lost in thought, I didn't notice my sister sigh beside me.

"Are you really sure about this? Is this really how it ends?"

I nodded.

"It's time to end it. You know, I've never liked fried chicken wings, not even as a child. Yet, all these years, that's the dish he's perfected. So, from the very beginning, the future wife he was cooking for was never me."