

The Last Goodbye Chapter 2

Even though I tried to keep myself in check while watching the two of them walk away arm in arm, I couldn't help the sharp, familiar ache that spread through my chest.

For a moment, I even regretted bringing up the divorce, tempted to tear the papers to shreds like I'd done so many times before.

Nevertheless, before I could act on the thought, a violent wave of pain crashed through my head. It felt like thousands of needles were stabbing into my brain and my skull was being pried open.

I clutched my head with both hands, gasping for air, desperately trying to find even a moment's relief. The pain was excruciating, leaving my body cold and drenched in sweat, each drop sliding down my forehead.

I had no idea how long it lasted, but when it finally eased, I found myself staring at the divorce papers in my hands. Without hesitation, I signed them and handed them to the nurse, asking her to send them to Valerie's lawyer.

Ten years of pouring my heart out hadn't moved Valerie one bit. How could I expect her to soften now, with only three months left for me to live?

It was time to live for myself, to experience whatever beauty and peace I could find in the world. That way, when the end came, I wouldn't regret my time on this earth.

With that resolve, I threw off the covers, got out of bed, and left the hospital, heading straight to the airport. I bought a ticket for the next flight to Netherwood.

My family had established their roots in Netherwood before relocating to Brightville when business priorities shifted.

I had spent a carefree childhood and the best ten years of my life in that city. It was where my life began, and it seemed only fitting for it to end there as well.

Valerie called in the middle of the night, just as I was settling into my hotel room.

"Jeffrey, get back here now! My stomach hurts!"

Her voice was strained with pain, each word spoken through gritted teeth. I could easily picture her pale and curled up on the bed, clutching her abdomen in agony.

In the past, I would've been beside myself with worry, rushing to soothe her with acupuncture and heat compresses. But now, I felt nothing. No panic, no urgency—just an unsettling calm.

Her pain was nothing compared to the physical and emotional torment she had put me through all these years. And it wasn't even real suffering; it was a hell of her own making.

Ever since Andrew came into the picture, Valerie had become reckless, throwing caution to the wind even during her menstruation.

Eventually, she developed chronic pain that even Brightville's top gynecologists couldn't cure.

I remembered watching her writhe in pain, torn between anger and heartbreak, feeling as though a knife was twisting in my gut.

Regardless, I used every connection I had to track down a traditional medicine doctor in a remote town who specialized in treating such conditions.

The old doctor was reclusive, refusing even the most exorbitant fees to make a house call.

In desperation, I spent three sleepless nights outside his clinic, pleading with him until he finally agreed to teach me his acupuncture techniques.

From then on, whenever Valerie's pain flared up, I would carefully perform acupuncture to ease her agony. Those were the rare moments when she showed me any kindness, and the faint smile that would grace her lips afterward was my only solace.

"I'm not in Brightville, and I can't return. Have Andrew take care of it. By the way, I've signed the divorce papers and sent them to your lawyer. Don't contact me again."

If my guess was right, she'd probably just slept with Andrew ten minutes before this call.

Be it the numbness of a heart that had finally died or the pain I wanted to return to her, my voice was flat and devoid of any emotion.

"You've got some nerve ignoring me! Jeffrey, you're going to regret this!"

Valerie's voice was a mix of fury and pain. I could almost hear her grinding her teeth through the phone. Then, there was nothing but the steady beeping of a disconnected call in my ear.

I stared at the phone for a moment, then turned it off and went back to sleep, though a small ripple of emotion lingered in my chest.

After all, she was the woman I had cherished for ten long years. It wasn't something I could just let go of overnight. That said, my life was ticking away. Even if I softened, I could only spare her three more months of pain relief.

Sure, I could be generous and teach Andrew the acupuncture and compression techniques. For the right amount of money, he'd probably take good care of her.

However, I didn't want to. I wanted her to remember me every time she doubled over in pain, to regret not treasuring me when she had the chance.

After Valerie's phone call, sleep was elusive, and I was restless. Thankfully, the night eventually passed, bleeding into dawn.

I tossed off the covers, got up, and went through my morning routine, deliberately dressing in the suit I'd carefully chosen the night before, trying to look as put together as possible.

I planned to visit the old Page family estate. Although it had been sold off years ago to cover debts when my family business, Page Group's finances took another hit, the place still held my childhood memories.

It was worth the visit for old times' sake.

But the moment I opened the door to my hotel room, I was met with an unexpected sight.

Valerie stood right in front of me. She was dressed in loose, casual clothes, yet still managed to look effortlessly stunning with her long legs, slim waist, and perfect curves.

However, her face was pale, and she appeared exhausted with dark circles under her eyes. It looked as if she hadn't slept all night.

"What are you doing here?" I hadn't anticipated seeing her and couldn't hide my surprise.

"Jeffrey, you've grown some nerve! You ran off and left me in pain all night. I almost died! So what if I left you alone in the hospital for one night? It was just a fever. Must you make such a big deal out of it?"

Seeing me seemed to unleash the full force of Valerie's pent-up frustration. She glared at me with such intense fury that I thought she wanted to tear me apart.

In the past, I would've rushed to her side and begged for forgiveness. But now, I didn't feel the need to placate her.

I considered walking away without a word, but there was a small part of me, a lingering sense of injustice, that wouldn't let go.

After a brief internal struggle, I decided to tell her the truth about my terminal brain cancer.

In any case, we were still married, so she deserved to know. And if she had even a shred of the affection we once shared, maybe she'd stay with me until the end.

At least then, I wouldn't have to face my final days completely alone—a fate too pitiful to bear.

“Valerie, I wasn't in the hospital because of a fever—” I began, looking directly into her eyes, speaking slowly. But before I could finish, a familiar voice cut me off.

“Valerie, it's all my fault. I didn't take good care of Jeffrey, and he felt neglected, so he ran away. Please, don't be mad at him!”

Andrew rushed over, his face filled with remorse as he looked at me, then turned to Valerie with those big, innocent eyes of his, ready to spew more nonsense.

“I-I'm so useless. Jeffrey helped you with acupuncture so many times right in front of me, but I still can't learn how to do it. I'm just too dumb!”

His sickly sweet words made my stomach churn, and I couldn't stop myself from rolling my eyes in disgust. But as usual, Valerie fell for it, her gaze softening as she looked at him.