

Chapter 3

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Halfway home, my phone buzzed. It's a notification from our old high school group chat.

"Selina is about to debut as a celebrity! Who would've thought our class would produce a star? It's such an honor! @Everyone."

My heart sank instantly. Memories from high school, the pain and humiliation, rushed back like a flood.

That's right. This was the same Selina Quentin who led others in bullying me relentlessly. She was the one who once beat me so badly I was barely clinging to life.

Selina was also none other than Zayn's childhood sweetheart, the girl he had always secretly adored. She was his first love.

I crouched on the sidewalk, trembling and staring at the endless stream of "Congratulations!" filling the chat.

Zayn had even posted a long, enthusiastic congratulatory message, far more passionate than anything he'd ever written for me. Every word was dripping with fondness, almost like a love letter.

It was painfully clear. Zayn was still obsessed with Selina.

How ironic. Just half an hour ago, he was yelling at me, and now he was reminiscing about the "good old days" with his childhood crush in the same group chat.

I absentmindedly rubbed the cut on my hand. The sting of the wound matched the ache in my chest.

I opened my chat with Zayn. I was ready to lay it all out and demand a divorce. But before I could type, a friend request from Selina popped up.

My vision blurred as panic set in. The air seemed to drain from my lungs, leaving me gasping for breath.

But after a few moments of mental preparation, I forced my trembling fingers to accept her request.

Her first message came almost immediately.

"Evelyn, it's been so long! How have you been lately?"

I froze. I didn't know how to respond. The unease and dread from all those years came flooding back.

Unable to face her, I chose to ignore her message and kept walking home.

But Selina wasn't done. A second message followed. This time, she went straight to the point.

"I know I was really awful to you in high school. I was young and stupid. I'm so sorry for what I did to you.

"Can you forgive me? I've realized my mistakes. It's been so many years. Can't we just let it go?"

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One after another, Selina sent over ten messages, apologizing profusely but laced with an undertone of pressure. It's almost as if it was my moral obligation to forgive her.

It felt like she was saying if I didn't forgive her, then I was the one being petty, clinging to the past, and refusing to let her move on.

But only someone who had lived through that pain could understand how deep it ran. How could she waltz back years later and demand forgiveness as if it were her right?

With Zayn constantly dragging up my past to mock me, it was impossible to forget.

At that moment, I had a realization. Zayn had taken over where Selina left off, continuing to bully me in her place.

When Selina finally ran out of things to say, I responded with one brief message.

"Rotten apples stay rotten. They'll never change."

I then deleted her contact.

I knew exactly why she had reached out. She wasn't looking for genuine forgiveness. She just wanted to clear her conscience before her debut. It was to protect her public image.

It wasn't until five or six in the morning that Zayn finally realized I had actually left.

"Why are you being so petty? I made a few jokes, and you ran away?"

"Leaving home over a joke, and even threatening me with a knife? Aren't you worried people will laugh at you?"

I laughed bitterly to myself. Since Zayn loved jokes so much, I decided I'd play the biggest joke of all on him and his childhood sweetheart.