

Oh, Now You Feel Bad?

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Chapter 1

It hit me out of nowhere—a sharp, crushing pain in my chest that stole the air from my lungs.

"Mommy, what's wrong?"

Luca's voice cut through the haze. My three-year-old was sitting right there, eyes wide and terrified.

I tried to smile, keep it together for him, but it felt fake even to me. I wanted to reach out, ruffle his messy hair, but my arm? Useless. Like it didn't belong to me anymore.

Luca's eyes welled up as he took in my pale face.

Then came the sobs, loud and desperate. "Mommy, are you dying? Don't leave me, please!"

Each cry felt like a hammer to my skull, the pain in my chest squeezing tighter, sharper.

"Go... call... Daddy," I gasped.

He didn't understand what was happening, so I could only tell him to call my husband, Bill Clayton, for help.

Luca wiped his face, slid off the bed, and bolted to the living room. Moments later, he was back, clutching my phone.

He held the phone up to my face, unlocking it. But by then, I was already slipping away, my body nothing more than a hollow, immobile shell.

'Luca, you're all I've got.'

At his age, 911 wasn't in his world yet. Bill's number was saved as my emergency contact. All Luca had to do was tap the icon.

Beep. Beep.

The call rang out. No answer. Just a voicemail kicking in.

Luca didn't get it—he kept yelling into the phone, "Daddy! Daddy, help!" over and over.

But my world was shutting down, darkness pulling me under.

Heart disease ran in the family—my dad, my grandfather, both gone because of it. I'd been careful, done all the right things. Regular checkups, healthy living.

And yet, here I was, my heart betraying me, giving out without warning.

When I opened my eyes, I saw myself—just lying there, lifeless.

Luca was still clutching the phone, his finger jabbing the call icon over and over. This time, it actually connected.

"Daddy?" Luca's voice shook, breaking up with tiny, hiccuping sobs. "When are you coming home? Mommy's on the bed, and she won't wake up."

Bill's voice came sharp and annoyed. "If she's not getting up, wake her. She's just being lazy."

"Look, I'm busy. Go ask your mom if you need something, and stop calling me for every little thing!"

Before Luca could reply, a woman's sultry voice cut in. "You promised today was about me. Forget her. Tonight, you're mine."

I let out a bitter laugh.

Marrying Bill had turned me into a stay-at-home mom, buried in endless chores—cooking, cleaning, taking care of Luca. But to him, I was just lazy, living the easy life.

And now, while I was dying on the bed, he was off sleeping with another woman.

I wanted to scream. To shout, 'I'm not lazy! I'm dying!' But no one could hear me.

Bill hung up.

Luca stared at the phone. He looked so lost, so unsure. Then, he climbed up next to me, carefully draping my arm over his tiny shoulders. Like that could somehow keep me here.

Tears spilled down my face.

He was just three. My baby. How was he supposed to make it without me? Would Bill actually take good care of him after I was gone?

As Luca's eyes fluttered shut, I hummed a lullaby, staying right there. His breathing slowed, soft and steady. Asleep.

I glanced at my body—still, empty—and ran a hand over my face. My rough hands, worn from years of scrubbing and cooking. The lines on my face that time and exhaustion had carved.

Maybe that's why Bill turned to his secretary, Ima Pegg.

He'd chosen her over me. Even when I needed him most.

Would he even cry when he found out I was gone? Just one tear—that's all I wondered. Would he even give me that?