

Rewritten 29

chapter 29

Madelyn shot back a message almost instantly.

Madelyn: [You can come to me anytime you want more. I'll make it for you.]

Ethan: [Deal.]

Zach watched the exchange with a heavy gaze. For reasons he could not quite understand, seeing Madelyn respond to another man's text elicited an odd discomfort, a feeling that something uniquely his was being claimed by another. He had accessed this information by secretly installing surveillance software on Madelyn's phone during a hospital visit.

For the next half hour, Madelyn chatted with Ethan about the usual humdrum of childhood daily life and interests. It was bland, mundane, and yet Zach consumed it all. He noticed how Madelyn had indeed changed. Once they finished, Zach felt strangely spent. He glanced at the clock—half—past eight. He had wasted more than an hour on Madelyn.

Back at the Jent residence, Hayson was out schmoozing. He would not return tonight, or likely any other night. His bed was elsewhere, amidst a rotation of mistresses. After sending her final text, Madelyn ascended the stairs to draw herself a bath.

In truth, the walnut cake had been Rosario's handiwork. Madelyn's role had been limited to minor flour kneading and water pouring. It was not that she could not do it; it was just that Rosario fretted over her, cautious of her healing wound. In her past life, Madelyn had honed her culinary skills to please Zach, cooking meals and pastries that would put Michelin chefs to shame. After all, as the saying goes, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Zach had indeed been ensnared, and he had become so particular about his food that he found outside meals unsatisfactory.

She had learned to cook for Zach because he suffered from a stomach condition. When he took over the family business, he often drank himself into oblivion, only to take out his frustrations on her. The worst incident landed him in the hospital with a bleeding ulcer, an admission she had forced upon him. From that day on, Madelyn ensured he ate three solid meals a day, never missing one. Even when Zach did not want her at his office, Madelyn would stand at the building's foot, entrusting meals to his assistant.

She believed that Zach would forever savor her cooking, but he had eventually grown tired.

Their third wedding anniversary had been the turning point. Madelyn had prepared a grand feast and waited for him to return. Hours turned into a snow-laden night. She remembered his icy words cutting through her anticipation like shards of frost.

“Madelyn,” he had begun, his voice colder than the snow outside, “even if you spend every day crafting meals with different ingredients, making a variety of dishes, the end result is always the same. No one can savor the same meal forever. Don’t waste your time. Rather than pouring your energy into this, think about how you can dress up better. Look at yourself now;

you’re about as appetizing as garbage.”