

Chapter 3

I wandered down the streets, the rain making my knees ache with every step. No big plans, just a vague idea: find a motel for the night, then figure out a job and maybe an apartment. Solid life plan, right?

Digging through my wallet, I was counting my meager cash when something caught my eye—a membership card. Soirée. Back in the day, it was my stomping ground as the Spencer family heiress. High-end, exclusive, dripping in luxury. Tom used it for business schmoozing later on, but I hadn't set foot there in years.

The card gave access to private rooms. Could I crash there? On a couch? The idea made me snort. At sixteen, I'd stacked champagne glasses there to celebrate piano wins. Now I was scheming how to freeload for the night.

I hopped on a bus and headed to the club. Inside, it was all sparkle and shine, with glitzy carpets and chandeliers. My rain-soaked clothes stuck out like a sore thumb, but the receptionist didn't blink. Polite, professional.

The room wasn't huge, but hey, it had a couch. That was enough for me.

A staff member grabbed my suitcase and led me down the hall. The place was dead quiet—those soundproofed walls really worked—except for one door up ahead that hadn't shut all the way. Laughter spilled out, loud and careless, breaking the stillness.

Once in my room, I unpacked in record time and headed to the front desk to ask for a blanket. I didn't make it far.

I slammed straight into Tom.

His tie was loosened, his face flushed, and he reeked of alcohol. Clearly, he'd stepped out for air, though his wobbly stance said it wasn't helping. The second he saw me, he froze, then smirked.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, his voice dripping with contempt. "You file for divorce, and now you're chasing me down? Second thoughts already?"

I kept moving, brushing past him, but he grabbed my wrist.

He was drunk, his sneer turning mean. "What's your angle now, Selene? Playing hard to get? How low can you sink?"

Yanking my hand free, I glared. "If you're that full of yourself, maybe get professional help."

But he didn't back off. He shoved me against the wall, his grip tightening as I twisted to escape. In the struggle, I accidentally pushed open the already cracked door next to us.

Inside, the noise was deafening. Someone was mid-shout: "Tonight, we're gathered here to celebrate—"

And then, a voice cut through, cold and commanding. "What's going on here?"

The man in the center of the room stood, his sharp gaze locking on me like a spotlight.

The room went dead silent. Every eye turned to me.

Mortified by all the attention, I planted my hands on the carpet, trying to steady myself as I got up. The second I stood, my vision blurred, and the room spun. I swayed, feeling like a total mess.

Before I could catch my balance, Tom grabbed my arm.

He'd always been a disaster when drunk—loud, mean, and unpredictable. Tonight was no different. His grip bit into my arm, and his words stung even more.

"Already moved on to your next man, Selene?" he sneered, his voice dripping with mockery.

I frowned, trying to shake him off, but then my focus landed on someone in the room.

Tyler Saun.

My memories of Tyler were frozen seven years ago—a quiet, painfully proper guy.

After my sixteenth birthday, he'd been introduced as my fiancé. No sparks, no epic love story. Just two families shaking hands over an arrangement.

Tyler always gave thoughtful gifts, and I'd nod politely, sending back equally bland thank-yous. He was perfect for an arranged marriage. Stable, predictable. But back then, I was chasing love.

And now? Here I was—soaked, disheveled, dragged down by Tom—standing in front of him like my mistakes had been gift-wrapped for comparison. The sharp contrast between Tyler and the mess I'd made of my life wasn't lost on me.

Before I could speak, Tyler stepped forward.

He hadn't been drinking. He stood there, sharp and composed, a far cry from the boy I remembered. The traces of softness I once knew were replaced by a commanding edge that could silence a room.

The moment he spoke, it was all about standing up for me. "The best kind of ex-husband is a dead one. Don't you know when to stop humiliating yourself?"

Before Tom could respond, Tyler grabbed his wrist. He forced him to let go of me, then calmly pulled me behind him, shielding me.

"You and Selene are divorced," Tyler said. "What right do you have to lay a hand on her? What you're doing now—it's called harassment."

Tom didn't miss a beat. "And what about you?" he shot back.

Tyler paused for a moment, then smiled. It wasn't soft or reassuring—it was sly, almost cocky.

"You already said it," Tyler replied, "Her next man. Her new flame. Her current boyfriend."