

Resent Reject Regret

Chapter 5 The Divorce Agreement

Deirdre's skin was screaming at being scalded, but nothing hurt more than her heart.

Charlene had begun to sob, but instead of being pissed off, Brendan winced in a true act of sympathy. It occurred to Deirdre that he did not hate seeing women cry in general.

He just hated seeing her cry.

Deirdre got to her hands and feet with great difficulty. "It wasn't... It wasn't me," she stated weakly, showing Brendan her blistered hand. "The water... See? All of it ended up here..."

"F*ck! Off!" Brendan bellowed. He then slapped her hand away.

Her blistered hand received the full impact of his force, and pain ripped through her system, knocking her so hard that she inhaled sharply. She almost fainted as a result.

All Brendan saw was a pretender falling back on her penchant for drama. "Shut the f*ck up! You don't get a say, b*tch. You should be glad that you're the one who got scalded. Had Lena been hurt, I wouldn't have just killed you—I would have made sure you suffered for days before you finally died!

"Get the f*ck out of here!"

Deirdre made her way to the door. Out of the corner of her eye, she could see mirth in Charlene's eyes.

"Bren? Stop it, okay? She only did what she did because she loves you," Charlene intoned. "You two have been married for two years by now. I don't want to be the wedge between this relationship!"

"Relationship?" Brendan sneered. "There is no relationship, and there's sure as hell no love to any of this! The only thing she should do now that you're awake is get the hell out of our hair! Jesus... She only got to be a rich housewife for two goddamned years because my family wouldn't agree to our marriage!"

The door closed behind Deirdre, muffling whatever came after his tirade. The only thing accompanying her was the spasm of pain emanating from her chest.

She took two steps forward before a wave of dizziness and nausea—both left over from her forced blood donation—crashed onto her. Even walking had become a tall order.

Tears then began to mar her face again.

She returned to the ground floor and sank into the couch.

Time passed, but Deirdre lost track of how long it had been until Brendan finally descended the stairs and threw some papers on the table.

“Sign.”

Her eyes caught the headline: ‘Divorce Agreement.’ She froze, lifted her head, and asked, “Didn’t you promise... we wouldn’t be getting a divorce today?”

Brendan’s impatience erupted out of him. “And what? Give you more opportunities to hurt Lena? I just want you to f*ck off as soon as possible. We can’t start over without you out of the picture!”

The absurdity of his accusation was sharpened by the jolts of agony still ringing from the back of her hand. Who was the one who had ended up hurt?

No. It did not matter anymore.

Deirdre picked up the agreement and read every clause and article. Brendan was certainly no miser—he offered her a luxury residence and 1.4 million dollars. The only rule she had to heed by was the promise to never show up at Neve again.

“The agreement is fair. I’m not opposed to signing it,” she declared, looking up from the paper before letting her eyes fall back on Brendan. “On one single condition, though.”

She placed her hand on her abdomen. When she spoke again, her voice was ringing with resolution. “I don’t need any compensation—not the house, not the money—to agree to this. Take ‘em away. All I want is to carry the baby to term in peace! If you agree to this, Bren, I’ll pack up right now and get out of your life forever!”

Brendan made no attempt to hide his disgust. “For f*ck’s sake! You’re still holding on to this delusion?!”

She flashed him a tired, mirthless smile. He was wrong—she was too sober to be delusional. She knew she would be left with nothing the moment she stepped out of this house. This baby was all she had left, and she would do whatever it took to save it.

“You can think of me however you like.” Deirdre sighed deeply. “All I’m asking is that you add this condition to the agreement, and I’ll pack up and leave immediately. I won’t show up in Neve for twenty years. But if you decide to withhold even this small kindness from my child, Bren? Then I won’t sign anything at all. I’ll even go public about my performance as Charlene McKinney and tell your entire family!”

Brendan immediately held her in a chokehold, fury blazing in his black eyes. “How dare you threaten me, McKinnon!”

Deirdre forced herself to ignore the sting in her heart and closed her eyes. “No. I just want you to know that I’m digging my heels in for my child.”

“F*ck! F*cking noble, are you?!” he jeered as he released her from his grip. He looked at her with pure, ugly disgust. “Fine. I’ll let it live. But mark my words, Deirdre McKinnon—if

you break any of the goddamned rules, I'll make both you and your kid wish you were in hell instead!"

He signed the papers and slapped them on Deirdre's face. The poor woman tried to pick them up, but the pain on her hand stopped her for a little bit.

"What now, drama queen?" Brendan snarled. "Casting for a new excuse not to sign?"

"No." She lowered her head, suffered through the pain silently, and signed the papers quickly.

It was a brief moment, but Brendan caught sight of her sore, blistered hand. It looked really bad, and for that millisecond, he realized she had not been acting at all.

That moment of sympathy passed, though. He told himself she deserved it for trying to harm his beloved.

"Pack all your things today and get the hell out of here as soon as you're done!" he barked. "If you're thinking about causing a scene or pulling any new tricks? F*cking don't. Steven will be watching you until he makes sure you're out of this country!"

Deirdre nodded, and Brendan practically sprung out of the hall with the agreement in his hand. He could not wait to have Steven process it. His excitement at the prospect of their divorce was all over his face.

Deirdre laughed mirthlessly and went to her room. It was time to pack, but she had never really had any possessions. The only thing she'd had when she had become Mrs. Brighthall was love—a foolish infatuation more than anything else. She had very few things in her possession.

After rummaging through her room, the only things she put in her suitcase were two outfits. Smiling self-deprecatingly to herself once more, she pushed open the door, ready to bid this life farewell.

Then, she remembered. Her phone wasn't with her.

Had she dropped it back in Charlene's room while being forced to donate her blood?

She left her suitcase and headed to the second floor. Just before she opened the door, however, she heard Charlene talking. Her hand froze, her fingertips resting on the metallic knob.

"I don't know how Brendan found her, but I swear, it was way too f*cking close! Like, thank God he didn't find out anything in the past two years, girl. I'm telling you—he could have found out about my facial surgeries six years back!"

Facial surgeries? Charlene had had surgeries before?

"Took me some tricks, but I got her *ss kicked out of the house as soon as I could. The last thing I want is for Brendan to realize that I wasn't the one who saved him from the fire.

Brendan is nice and all, but that other side of him? God, he'd put me through hell if he knew!

"I am done. Like, so done with the sh*t I had to suffer, the hoops I had to jump through—I am done!... He was holding her f*cking hand, f*cking blabbering about marrying her and making her his wife back then, okay?! And I just—no. F*ck her, f*ck no. That's why I had them cut my face up and make it look like hers. He has to believe that I'm the one who saved him, not that b*tch who came out of nowhere!

"Do you know how much I've sacrificed for this? I lost my real face over it! And now, this is the last hoop I have to jump through. It's all or f*cking nothing! I'm not letting Deirdre-f*cking-McKinnon steal what's supposed to be mine!... Yeah, don't just sit there! You want money? Get your *ss moving and finish that b*tch once and for all! She's pregnant with his child, for god's sake! She is not leaving this city with that thing still inside of her! I won't allow it!"

Deirdre's eyes widened in disbelief. All this time, she had thought Brendan had simply forgotten the promise he had made to her in his post-rescue delirium. She had thought he had simply realized he had fallen in love with Charlene after all. But the truth was that she had stolen Deirdre's rightful place from her!

The shock made her mind go blank. She stumbled backward and crashed onto the railing behind her.

"Who the f—?"

Charlene swung the door open and found herself staring at Deirdre. She froze before willing herself to recover and demand, "You didn't hear anything, did you? I was just horsing around with my friend. It wasn't real!"

Deirdre glared daggers at her, and her lips were trembling. "How... How dare you?! How dare you! That thing between you and Brendan isn't true love at all! You went through multiple surgeries to look like me so he would think you're the one who saved him six years ago!"

Deirdre had believed she was the impostor for two years! Two years!

Charlene panicked. "No, you misunderstood! I love him! Our love is real!"

"How about you try to convince him yourself?! Because I'm telling him the truth!" Deirdre roared. Her blood was boiling. She started toward the stairs, her footsteps quickened by adrenaline.

Charlene sprung up and gave chase. As Deirdre was nearing the end of the stairs, Charlene's desperation morphed into an ugly thought. Her eyes hardened, and she shoved the former with all her might.

"Ahhhh!" Deirdre felt her weight pulling her forward. She instinctively covered her abdomen with her hands, but the rest of her body answered gravity's call and plummeted. Her head slammed on the cold, hard floor at full impact, and pain temporarily blinded her.

For a while, her body refused to move. She watched Charlene descend the stairs steadily before glaring at her. "Can't you just be happy living out the rest of your stupid life in the slums? Why the f*ck did you have to steal Brendan from me? Stupid b*tch. You really think he'll believe you if you tell him the 'truth'? Get real, sweetie. To him, you're just a clingy, delusional c*nt who doesn't know when to quit!"

Darkness overcame Deirdre.

When she woke up a while later, her head was throbbing. The blood on the floor had dried up.

How much time had passed? She had no idea. There was no one in the living room.

It felt like all of her strength had left her. She felt bouts of nausea, but she remembered just what she'd wanted to do. Brendan had no idea... Brendan had no idea about the truth!

Her strength returned from an unknown source, and she used it to hoist herself up shakily from the floor.

She had always been the one Brendan loved. The only reason he did not know was because he had been fooled.

He had never forgotten their promise!