

Second Marriage to Mr. Rich

Chapter 11

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The snow had melted into puddles on the ground, causing a muddy mess as people kept stepping into them.

"I'll go in to get my ID. Wait here for me," Angeline said, pushing open the door.

Ned unbuckled his seat belt in the front passenger seat and said, "I'm going with you. Or else, you might run away."

Ned and Miles followed Angeline into the area, carefully sidestepping the muddy puddles on the ground. They frowned as they looked at the shabby area that was filled with people.

"How could you live here?" Miles asked, shifting his gaze from the pile of rubbish by the roadside to Angeline. "Even if you didn't want to stay at the dorms anymore, you could still have gone to Lory's! This place is too shabby and shady for a single female like you."

"It's fine." Angeline didn't elaborate any further.

It was too expensive for her to stay at a hotel. What little savings she had from taking up part-time jobs while studying would never be enough to cover her stay there.

And if she were to rent a room or an apartment to herself, she would have to sign a long-term contract with a landlord. Since she wasn't planning to stay in Oceanford for long, there was no need for that either.

Even if this place was quite shady and run-down, it was the cheapest and easiest place she could rent on a short-term basis.

The path leading to Angeline's temporary home got more and more deserted. Finally, they stopped at an unnumbered wooden door that was padlocked shut. Ned frowned even harder when he saw this. Angeline didn't invite them in. Instead, she went straight to a drawer and started looking for

her ID.

The wooden door didn't look safe or secure. The place inside wasn't huge either. There was just enough space for a bed, a makeshift closet, a simple desk and chair, and an

old stove with some rusty-looking pots and pans. There was no toilet or bathroom in sight.

Nonetheless, the bed was neatly made up and the desk and chair were clean and dust-free. Even the floor was clean and sparkly.

Angeline locked the door behind her and looked at the two people waiting for her. "Let's go!"

+15 BONUS

The journey to the courthouse from Angeline's place was quiet. Each of them was plagued by their own thoughts.

The judge at the courthouse hearing looked at the two people seated far away from each other with similar injuries to their heads. He went through the whole routine, said what was necessary, and finally granted them the certificate of divorce.

Ned looked at the document in his hand. Everything went so smoothly that he couldn't even believe himself.

"You've got your divorce. Ned Fletcher, can I get your public apology by tomorrow?" Angeline asked. .

Ned came back to his senses and said, "Okay."

Angeline nodded and got up. "After your public apology, I will leave Oceanford at once. I won't appear before you or Ingrid ever again."

Ned clutched the document in his hand, suddenly seeing the scene where he cornered Angeline against the wall behind the school building in his mind.

He folded the document and pocketed it. Then, he looked at Angeline grimly and said, "That place where you're living now is unsafe. I told you I won't take back the apartment I gave you. You-"

"No, thank you." Angeline also pocketed her copy of the cert in her puffy jacket. "So... This is goodbye."

After finalizing their divorce, Angeline had nothing to do with Ned anymore. She hoped that they would never meet again in the future.

Miles saw that Angeline refused to take Ned up on his offer, so he said, "I have an empty house you can stay at for now."

Angeline still shook her head and pulled her scarf over her nose and mouth. Only her cold eyes were seen. "I'll go and withdraw the case now. If there's nothing else you want from me, I'll be taking my leave." "I'll drive you there!" Miles said.

Once more, Angeline shook her head and said courteously, "It's out of the way for you, so you don't have to trouble yourself."

Seeing Angeline leave without so much as a backward glance made Ned draw his lips in a

tight line.

+15 BONUS

"I never thought you guys would end up like this," Miles said with a sigh.

While waiting for the bus at the station outside the courthouse, Angeline stared at the divorce certificate in her hands and got lost in thought. Today's Bonus Offer

GET IT NOW

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Angeline never thought that she and Ned would end up like this either. But it was neither his nor her fault that they ended up like this.

On Ned's 22nd birthday, he said that his first wish was to register his marriage with her as soon as possible. His second wish was to spend his 26th birthday with their child, and his third wish was to grow old with Angeline by his side.

Only the first wish came true.

She remembered coming out of the courthouse right after registering their marriage. Ned told her he was going to burn the marriage license after their marriage because they would only be separated through death and not divorce.

To Angeline, who lost two years of her life after that, everything still felt like it just happened yesterday.

Now, they were back at the courthouse again for their divorce. It felt ironic to hold the divorce certificate in her hands.

Angeline rubbed her reddening eyes with the back of her hand and tucked her cert and ID away safely. Just as she was about to unlock her phone to book a flight ticket to Cloudsville, a black sedan rolled to a stop before her.

The window in the back passenger seat rolled down. Sean's emotionless face appeared behind the glass.

Angeline glanced around her and hurriedly locked her phone before walking up to the car. She crouched over, holding on the the side of the car, and asked Sean, "What are you doing

here?" 1

"Just came back from the Oceanford branch," Sean replied before gesturing to Angeline. '

Get in the car."

Sean's assistant had already alighted from the car and greeted Angeline with a polite smile. He was about to open the door for her. However, Angeline didn't move from her spot.

She looked at Sean's facial features and considered for a while. She said, "Mr. Lawson, I think it would be better if we pretended to be strangers from today onward. You always appear in media channels and articles, and if someone snaps a photo of us together, people will see how much we resemble each other.

"And then, the Emmersons will come after you, especially Benjamin. The whole Lawson

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family might even be dragged into this mess!"

+15 BÔNUS

Angeline then saw that the bus was about to arrive at the stop. She said, "The bus is arriving.

Mr. Lawson-

"Get in the car first," Sean ordered in his deep voice.

Angeline curled her fingers against the car as the bus started honking at Sean to leave.

However, there wasn't a flicker of panic or hurry in Sean's eyes. He still looked at Angeline with a calm expression, as if he was challenging her.

Just before the honking bus swerved into the stop, Angeline relented and got into the car. .

Before Angeline could tell the driver where to drop her off, someone called Sean on his phone and started talking about work.

Angeline saw that Sean's lap was full of documents he was in the middle of reviewing. So, she put her phone on silent mode and kept as still as possible so she wouldn't disturb him. However, news of her divorce had spread like wildfire. She kept getting tons of messages on her phone, making it vibrate non-stop.

Sean finally hung up and fished a pen from his pocket before uncapping it to sign some documents. He then lowered his head and asked Angeline, who was busy fiddling with her phone, "Why aren't you at the hospital?"

Angeline was busy deleting the contacts on her phone. She didn't even lift her head when she answered, "Ned said he would apologize to me publicly tomorrow, so I came here to finalize the divorce with him." Sean's pen froze mid-air.

Had they finalized their divorce already?

He hadn't expected it to happen so quickly.

The first time Sean noticed the spark between Ned and Angeline, he'd told her that Ned was a good friend to have. However, he wasn't a suitable companion for the rest of her life..

Angeline had only been 17 years old then. Her messy hair was tied back in a high ponytail. She wore a baggy, cream-colored batwing shirt, slim-fitting black jeans, and a pair of white canvas shoes with a backpack from Math Club.

She looked fresh and lively as she looked at Sean with her bright eyes with a hint of stubbornness in them.

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After paying Zachary via online transfer for the clothes he bought her, Angeline then deleted his contact. The only people left in her list of contacts were Anne York, Henrietta York, Professor James Dickson, and Sean Lawson.

Sean's profile picture was an underwater photo of the sun. He hadn't posted a single thing on his social media accounts. Anyone would think that his account belonged to an elderly person.

Angeline's thumb hovered over Sean's profile picture.

"How much was the bill for my hospital stay last night? I'll transfer the amount back to you,

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Angeline said, turning to look at Sean, who was reading a document. "I also ruined your tie, so I'll compensate you for that too."

The car suddenly swerved to the left. Angeline's phone slipped out of her hands as she fell toward Sean.

Angeline panicked and tried to reach out to grab onto something to steady herself, but failed. She landed right in Sean's arms. She was just about to reach down to retrieve her phone when a hand quickly stopped her.

Coincidentally, her phone had fallen right in Sean's crotch.

Realizing quickly that her phone was at an embarrassingly awkward place, Angeline's ears turned red with embarrassment.

She lifted her head and met with Sean's deep gaze from behind the gold-rimmed glasses. All of a sudden, she felt her heart thumping wildly against her chest.

The driver, Sebastian Lindt, stared at the car ahead of him that was fleeing the scene with both its blinkers on. He was also covered in a layer of cold sweat. He quickly said, "Sorry, Mr. Lawson. That car suddenly overtook us ...

"Don't worry about it," Sean said, his voice coming from above Angeline's head.

Angeline quickly sat up straight and apologized. "Sorry."

Sean then handed her phone back to her and picked up the fallen documents.

"Thank you."

After leaving the no-overtaking zone, the sedan arrived safely at the entrance to a huge

+15 BONUS

mansion in the city.

Angeline told Sebastian, "You can just drop me off here."

"Where you're staying now is very dangerous," Sean said, closing the document folder in his lap. He spoke in a tone that left no room for discussion. "Sebastian will get your things for you."

She didn't ask him how he knew where she was now staying. When she saw Sean getting down from the car, she also opened the door on her side and hopped out. "I'm leaving Oceanford tomorrow. It's only for a night. It's too much of a bother for him to bring my things here and there."

Sean held his document folder and gestured for Angeline to enter. "It's only for one night. Even if you're itching to sever ties with the Lawsons as quickly as possible, it can wait one more night."

Angeline clenched her fists. Sean had been in charge of Lawson Global for far too long, so he was used to speaking with authority. Even if he hadn't meant for it to be an order, almost anything he said sounded like one. He was so dominant that she didn't know how to refute him. 1

She obediently handed over her keys to Sebastian and said, "Most of my things are already in a suitcase. Please just bring along the book on my table and the items in my drawer." "Alright," Sebastian responded. .

Angeline had been to Sean's mansion in Oceanford before. However, she'd never spent the night before.

"You're back, Mr. Lawson," Maria Waters greeted. She was the housekeeper and had been busy cooking in the kitchen when she heard them entering. She also greeted Angeline warmly. "Ms. Angie, you're here too! Perfect timing. I just made some chicken stew."

After telling Maria to prepare the guest bedroom on the second floor for Angeline, Sean entered his study for a meeting. Angeline had lunch alone.

Ned's public apology came a lot quicker than she was promised.

Three hours after they were officially divorced, Ned's handwritten apology was posted all over Oceanford College's notice boards and online forums.

Ned also wrote a public apology on his personal social media accounts.

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Oceanford College also issued a letter of clarification to clear Angeline of all wrongdoing.

Ned stated that Angeline wasn't the one who drugged him. Even though they had both consumed the drugged drinks, Angeline managed to stay awake and resist the drug as it ran its course. She hadn't done what the perpetrator wanted her to do.

However, because of his grudge toward Angeline, he had taken revenge on her by spreading her nudes and defaming her online against his better judgement. He also refused to listen to her explanations, causing stress and trauma to Angeline's emotions and daily life. And for that, he was deeply regretful and apologized sincerely to her.

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Ned's post was flooded with comments. Most of them were shocked, while some of them suspected something fishy going on.

Some comments called Ned a huge jerk for spreading Angeline's nudes online. They even encouraged Angeline to sue him.

There were also people commenting who heard about Ned's and Angeline's past. They said that this was just Ned's way of trying to save some of Angeline's dignity for the sake of their past relationship. Some other people asked Ned what he was going to do about Angeline's nudes that had already been leaked online. Many male students had the photos saved on their devices, with some even reposting the photos to other platforms.

The silver lining was that the incident was barely one week old, meaning that it hadn't gone that viral before Ned's public apology came out.

Angeline sincerely hoped that the scandal would soon blow over.

As she was going to leave tomorrow, Angeline didn't unpack her stuff from her suitcase. She only took out her pajamas and toiletries from it. Her body was still covered in cuts and bruises, so she couldn't shower.

After washing up, Angeline thought of going downstairs to grab a glass of water before going to bed. Just as she was descending the stairs, she saw Sean standing at the refrigerator in the kitchen, talking on his phone.

Sean's tall figure stood in between the shadows and the light. His hair was still wet and dripping onto the towel draped over his neck. He wore a dark green shirt over his shoulders with its buttons undone, showing his flawless complexion and unmistakable chest and abdominal muscles. .

He looked handsome without his glasses on. In fact, he looked cozy and comfortable.

"I'm still grateful to the Lawsons for nurturing and bringing me up. I didn't reject the arranged marriage with the Scott family because I was being ungrateful. It's just that I don't think the Scotts are a suitable marriage partner."

Sean lit up a cigarette. He spoke in a low, scratchy voice that Angeline couldn't tell how he was feeling at that moment. "Also, instead of giving Lawson Global to an adopted son, don't you think it's better to leave it to someone who is actually blood-related to the Lawsons? If

+15 BONUS

you're willing to to make the effort, you'll realize... that Angeline Emmerson is a very distinguished person." (1

Angeline couldn't tell what the other party on the line said. Sean pulled the ashtray closer and tapped his cigarette against it, a frown forming on his face.

He suddenly realized that someone else was there. Sean looked up. His calm eyes met with Angeline's stare.

Angeline stood at the foot of the stairs, not knowing whether she should continue toward the kitchen or head back into her room.

Sean didn't think that Angeline would still be awake at this hour. He shifted his gaze and put out his cigarette in the ashtray. Then, he held his phone between his head and shoulders as he started doing up the buttons on his shirt.

He spoke into the phone, saying, "Alright. I'll be at the Regalia Hotel at 7:30 pm tomorrow. Rest well."

After hanging up, Sean took off the towel hanging around his neck and looked at Angeline. "Why are you still up?"

Sean's voice was low and scratchy. Angeline didn't know if it was because he smoked.

"I came down for some water," Angeline said, walking toward the refrigerator.

Sean threw his towel onto the tabletop and opened the refrigerator to take out a bottle of water for her. Angeline hurried forward and took it from his hands. Then, she bid him good night and fled upstairs.

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As Angeline disappeared up the stairs, Sean finally averted his gaze and put another cigarette between his lips. He turned around and leaned back against the kitchen island. His face was briefly illuminated when he lit up his cigarette with a lighter.

The refrigerator door showed a reflection of Sean being surrounded by a cloud of white smoke. The past started playing in his head like an old film.

The first time he met her, he was 15 years old, and Angeline was ten.

It was a rainy day at the police station. Angeline, conveniently forgotten by the Lawsons, was hiding behind a tree as she watched her mother being bundled up into a luxury car. She refused to live with her mother at the Lawsons'.

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The next time Sean met Angeline, he was 17 years old, and she was 12.

Angeline had been stabbed twice because she wanted to save Ned. She lay on the hospital bed and refused the Lawsons' help once again.

She was a scrawny kid back then. She told them calmly and seriously, "Outcasts should stay out of other people's lives. We should just do whatever is necessary so that we won't harbor expectations of anyone else. So, please don't interfere with my life. This is for the Lawsons.. and you."

Sean had felt that it was unfair to her back then, but Angeline's calm reply made him come back to his senses.

That was when he went behind the Lawsons' backs and told the Fletchers that if they brought Angeline up in the guise of repaying her for the favor, the Lawsons would continue supporting them. This was the only time that Sean had ever interfered in Angeline's business.

It was also then that Sean started paying a little more attention to this girl who was focused on just "doing whatever was necessary" to live.

He watched as the previously weak and dirty little girl he first saw continued to shine brightly. When she was in middle school, she was selected to join the Math Olympiad team and became a record-holder for scoring full marks. 1

She bagged a gold the first time she represented the country at the International Math Olympiad. It was then that she became famously known as the genius from Oceanford.

Sean was aware of every improvement she made, every record she broke, and every award she received. He had been watching her as she shone like the brightest star in the sky.

Sean then looked down at the glowing cigarette stick between his fingers and puffed out a cloud of smoke, trying to hide his emotions.

He had been paying attention to her, so he also knew about her and Ned's undying love for each other.

Angeline brought the water back to the room and took a sip. Her phone then started vibrating on the bed. +15 BONUS

She capped the bottle of water and fetched her phone. It was a call from Zachary.

Angeline hadn't had time to change her number yet. Just as she was debating on whether to accept the call or not, the screen dimmed down again and showed that she had four missed .

calls.

A short while later, her phone lit up again.

She answered the call this time and put the phone to her ear. "Hello-

"Angie! Something bad has happened. Anne pushed Ingrid and Ned down from the stairs at the airport! Ned doesn't remember Anne and is planning to sue her for attempted murder. She's at the Newland Street police station right now.

Angeline's head was all a blur. What was Anne doing in Oceanford?

Even if Anne was in Oceanford, she was a scared and timid little thing. How would she dare to push Ingrid over? 1

"W-What's happened to Ingrid now?"

"I don't know yet, but she asked my sister to go over and have a look at her. They're still doing the necessary check-ups. Wait at home. I'll come and get you."

Angeline felt her heart thumping loudly against her chest. She forced away the shakiness in her voice and said calmly, "You don't have to come and get me. I'll go to the police station now to see Anne." Zachary disagreed with her. "I'll bring you to the hospital to see Ingrid first. Angie, take my advice as your friend. Ned still doesn't remember anything. You'd better not let him learn about your relationship with Anne. Otherwise, if he misunderstands you, he won't go easy on her. The reason I'm calling is to tell you to please stay out of "

Before Zachary could finish, Angeline had already hung up on him. She quickly changed out of her pajamas and hurried out of the door. 1

No matter what, Angeline had to see Anne first and find out what was going on. It was only then that she'd be able to offer any explanation to other people.

At the same time, the news of an anti-fan pushing Ingrid down the stairs went viral on social media.

Angeline looked at the videos and articles circulating online in the cab.

In the shaky video footage, she could see Ingrid's fans and anti-fans getting into physical

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+15 BÔNUS

fights with each other. Ingrid's bodyguards tried dissuading them and breaking up their fights under Ingrid's orders, and Ned had a mask and sunglasses on his face as he shielded Ingrid behind her, backing away from the commotion.

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+15 BÔNUS

Anne's side profile moved in and out of the screen. It had been circled in red, perhaps to make it easier for people to detect her.

In the video, Anne's sweaty face was filled with anxiety and fear from the crowd of people pressing against her. Then, she seemed to look in Ned's direction and call out his name. After that, she tried to move forward through the crowd with difficulty.

When her face was close enough to show up clearly in the video, she was suddenly shoved forward, knocking against Ned's arm, which was wrapped protectively around Ingrid. Ingrid lost her balance because of the heels she wore.

As everyone screamed, Ned and Ingrid rolled down the staircase. Ned's arm was still wrapped protectively around Ingrid.

The viral video ended there. It was obvious that someone had pushed Anne.

When Zachary saw Angeline insisted on seeing Anne, he turned the car around and made a beeline for the police station. He waited for her there.

When he saw her get out of the cab, he straightened up from where he leaned against his car and stubbed out his cigarette. He hurried forward to stop her. "Angie, there's already too huge a misunderstanding between you and Ned.

"If you get caught up in this mess, it's highly likely he'll think you instructed Anne to hurt Ingrid. Do you think he'll let Anne off the hook?"

"We've already gotten divorced. Why would I need to do anything to Ingrid?" Angeline shoved his hand away.

Anne and the fans who'd caused trouble had been taken to the police station. It had been close to half a year since they'd last seen each other; Anne shot to her feet when she saw Angeline. Her pale face was covered in tears.

"Sit down!" a police officer barked.

Anne sat down fearfully. She didn't take her eyes off Angeline. It was only after Angeline had spoken to the police and walked in Anne's direction that Anne burst into tears. "I didn't harm anyone, Angie! Someone pushed me! I already told the police I'm not a bad person!"

Angeline held Anne's cuffed hands and tried to calm her down. "I know, I know! I already saw the video. Don't be scared, Anne. Tell me why you were at the airport in the first place." +15 BONUS

"I just arrived in Oceanford. Just last week, the Emmersons came to me and said that Benjamin had reached an age where he could marry. They wanted me to give them your mother's number, but I told them your mother was already dead. (1)

"Then, they demanded I give them your grandfather's number. They said that Benjamin's his grandson as well, so he has to help prepare the wedding gifts. I kept telling them I didn't know anything. 1

"A few days ago, that scumbag, George, called me and said he was going to have Benjamin join some TV program to help him search for his family. He threatened to expose you and ruin your reputation if I didn't give him your mother's or grandfather's number."

Anne sobbed. "I knew about what happened to you in Oceanford. Those photos ... I was worried about you but didn't dare to call you to ask about it. Yesterday, the staff from that TV program, 'The Family Search', called me and asked me some questions.

"Then, they said they'd buy me a flight ticket to take me to Oceanford so I could act as a witness in the TV program. I only wanted to take the chance to speak up to you; it was also a chance for me to visit you and Ned."

A TV program that helped others search for their family? Angeline's heart jolted.

Anne wiped her tears. "I even brought a photo of you and Ned visiting me at our village every summer. I figured that since he'd lost his memories, maybe the photo could make him remember something. When I saw him at the airport earlier, I... I just wanted to show him the photo.

"I didn't mean to hurt anyone! You know I wouldn't do anything like that! You have to believe me, Angie!"

Anne hadn't known a thing about Ned losing his memories. Whenever she spoke to Angeline over the phone, she would urge Angeline and Ned to throw a wedding.

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It was only when the 14-year-old girl Anne had adopted last year had seen videos of Ned announcing his love for Ingrid that Anne found out about Ned losing his memories.

She'd also learned that the people around Ned hadn't dared to mention Angeline's name to him during the two years Angeline was comatose. They'd even burned all photos of her. Anne wasn't educated. It wasn't easy for her to come to Oceanford; all she wanted to do was bring a photo of Ned and Angeline together so she could help Angeline. She would never think of harming anyone, though. 1

"I know, Anne," Angeline said soothingly. "Don't be scared, okay? The police won't accuse you of something you haven't done. I'll head to the hospital to check on how Ingrid's doing. Then, I'll think of a way to get you out."

"Have I caused trouble for you, Angie?" Anne sobbed. "I'm sorry! I only wanted to help. I didn't expect to cause trouble for you! I was afraid of the Emmersons harming you and finding your mother. I always make a mess of everything..."

"Don't say that." Angeline shook her head. She held Anne's hand tightly. "Don't be scared, Anne. I'm here for you." 1

Zachary followed Angeline silently. When they were out of the police station, he said, "Shouldn't you tell the Lawson family about the Emmersons wanting to go on TV? At the very least... you should let Mr. Sean know."

He was referring to Sean Lawson. When Zachary saw Angeline silently fiddling with her phone, he thought she was afraid the Lawsons would find out that Sean was still in contact with his biological family and be upset with him. (1

He said, "I know you're worried that asking Mr. Sean for help will affect his future, but it'll only be easier for people to find out about your relationship once the Emmersons go on TV! Now that Mr. Sean's in charge of Lawson Global, his word is the only one that'll stop the program from airing."

"The Family Search" had high viewership ratings; it was one of Oceanford TV's best programs. Its host, Ian Taleman, was a popular talkshow host and comedian. He also came from a powerful family. As a member of the Stone family, Zachary could invite Ian out for a chat, but it probably

+15 BONUS

wouldn't mean anything. Things were different for Sean, though.

As Zachary racked his brains trying to advise Angeline, the cab she'd hailed pulled up outside the police station. "Thanks for telling me about this; I'm not gonna trouble you any further." "Angeline!" Zachary got mad. He pressed a hand against the car door. His Adam's apple bobbed as he said, "Are you cutting ties with me just because things have ended between you and Ned? Is it because I grew up with him?"

"That's unfair to me! Ned's not the only man on this earth; do you know how happy I was when you two got divorced? I-"

"So?" Angeline's cool, calm voice pulled Zachary out of his fit. His chest heaved. He knew he'd crossed the line.

Setting aside the fact that Angeline didn't have feelings for him, there was the disparity between their family backgrounds, and the relationship between the Stone and Fletcher families... and even his relationship with Ned. What could he give Angeline?

Could he marry her? No.

What sort of identity could he give Angeline if they were to get together? A secret lover? Someone as proud as Angeline would never agree to that, even if she loved him. There was no chance now since she didn't think of him that way in the first place.

"Excuse me, please." Angeline opened the car door and got in, shutting the door without another word.

The hospital's entrance was surrounded by paparazzi and Ingrid's fans. Angeline had a mask on as she entered through a side entrance. She wanted to seek out Zachary's sister, Vanessa Stone, to find out how Ingrid and Ned were doing.

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"They're fine, so don't worry." Vanessa's pregnant belly was prominent underneath her white coat. Her smile was as gentle as always. "Ned protected Ms. Dalton well, so she only had a dislocated ankle. It's already been tended to. Ned's also only been bruised and

scratched in a few places."

Angeline was relieved to hear that. As long as Ned and Ingrid weren't badly injured, Anne could probably be released soon.

"Dr. Stone, we've received a call from the ER. They need you there," a nurse popped her head out of the elevator and called out to Vanessa urgently.

Angeline moved aside to make way for Vanessa. "You should go, Vanessa."

"Alright." Vanessa put her stethoscope into the pocket of her coat. "It's late, so be careful when .

you head home. Text me when you arrive."

Angeline nodded: After leaving the building, she sat in the dimly lit garden. She looked down at her phone and punched in a number she'd memorized. But she hesitated before calling it.

As Zachary had said, the current Ned didn't know about her relationship with Anne. This phone call would easily make him misunderstand her.

But if she didn't say anything, would the fact that she hadn't contacted him make things worse once he found out the truth himself?

As Angeline hesitated, she heard a familiar voice ring out behind her. "You mean this woman named Anne York is Angeline's adoptive mother?"

She turned around. There were some trees and plants between the bench she sat on and the corridor. She could vaguely see Ned and Ingrid's cousin smoking by the trash can

Angeline remembered Ingrid's cousin because he'd been the one to burst into the room and take photos of her and Ned when they'd had those laced drinks.

Later, the photos Ned had plastered all over Oceanford College had been the ones taken by Ingrid's cousin, Tommy Yates.

"Yeah. You don't remember the past, so you might not know this. Angeline's birth mother was abducted to Emmerson Village, right? Anne York had escaped that hellhole with Angeline's mother. "After Angeline's mother died from major blood loss when she was inducing labor, the

+15 BONUS

Lawsons didn't want to have anything to do with her because they hated the Emmersons. Anne's the one who raised her for two years. She also changed Angeline's name from Jodie to Angeline." Tommy continued, "Later, Anne fell sick and couldn't care for Angeline anymore. Since the Lawson family didn't want her, the people from Emmerson Village brought her back. They happened to save you from your kidnappers. And later ... Angeline latched onto you and followed you to Oceanford."

Ned leaned against a tree, crossing a leg casually. His eyes were like deep pools as he stood there silently. 1

"That York woman's the one who cared for Angeline when she was a vegetable. She can't have kids, so she's always thought of Angeline as her own. I bet Angeline's the one who told that York woman to harm Ingrid!

"Trust me on this-Angeline will definitely come to you to ask you to let that York woman off the hook. Don't give in to her when the time comes; you have to avenge Ingrid!"

"And how do you think I should do that?" Ned asked.

"Look, she laced your drink so she could sleep with you and break you and Ingrid up. Everyone knows Miles and Mallory Locke are her best friends; she must've pretended to call the police before putting on an act with Miles and calling off the report.

"If that's not a sign of guilt, I don't know what is. Ingrid almost fled the country to avoid you because of that, remember?"

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+15 BONUS

Ned's frown deepened at Tommy's words. He flicked his cigarette, looking impatient.

"If not for you plastering Angeline's photos all over Oceanford College to threaten Ingrid not to leave without a word, we probably wouldn't be able to find her now," Tommy said.

The tree leaves rustled in the night breeze. Some loose strands of Angeline's hair fluttered as well, blocking her vision. It was hard to discern the look in her eyes.

Angeline clutched her phone tightly. Her eyes burned with unshed tears. So, that was why Ned had plastered photos of her all over Oceanford College. He was using her to threaten Ingrid. How ridiculous. "What exactly are you getting at?" Ned asked impatiently.

Tommy stubbed out his cigarette and leaned close to Ned. "Though you swore nothing happened between you and Angeline that night, it's still a thorn in Ingrid's side. I bet it makes you uneasy, too."

Ned's

eyes darkened at having his sore spot prodded at. "So?"

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"I bet Angeline will call you soon to speak up for that York woman. When she does, you can invite her out-give her a taste of her own medicine. Drug her with the same thing you laced your drink with! "Zachary Stone likes her, doesn't he? We can take this opportunity to make his wish come true. As long as he can prove Angeline's a virgin, Ingrid won't have anything to be worried about. And even if something did happen between you two that night... 1

"Zachary will be grateful to you for making his wish come true. He'll do anything for you. Let's say Angeline agreeing to the divorce was just part of her plan to win you back. She won't have the nerve to pester you after sleeping with another man, will she? It's the perfect chance to rid yourself of her.

At Ned's silence, Tommy chuckled. "Don't tell me you're reluctant to do it because you still have feelings for her, Ned."

"Is that all the crap you can come up with?" Ned tugged at his collar.

"Do as I say, then! Look the last time you listened to me and plastered Angeline's photos everywhere, you managed to make Ingrid stay. Listen to me this time, and I guarantee she'll agree to marry you!" +15 BONUS

As soon as the words were out of Tommy's mouth, Ned's phone rang. He pulled it out of his pocket and glanced at it. Then, he answered it and turned to head into the building, sounding gentle as he said, "You're awake, baby? No, I didn't go far. I was smoking with Tommy. I'll be back right now!"

Angeline watched as Ned hurried away. She no longer had the strength to run after him to explain herself. She removed the familiar phone number she'd typed out earlier and put her phone into her pocket. Then, she sat silently on the bench, almost burying her face in her scarf.

She didn't know how long she sat there, but it was long enough for the chilliness to travel from her ankles to her calves. The clenched fists she'd tucked into her pockets gradually loosened. Then, she pulled out her phone and called Ned.

Angeline was still holding out a shred of hope for Ned's conscience.

"What is it?" he asked in a lowered voice.

"I went to see Anne. She came to Oceanford because Benjamin wanted my grandfather's number so he could demand he pay for some wedding gifts. Anne doesn't know my grandfather's number, nor did she want to give it to him.

"That's why Benjamin and the rest of the Emmersons went on 'The Family Search' to track the Lawsons down. The program's crew invited Anne to Oceanford; she ran into you at the airport by coincidence and wanted to speak to you. .

"But when she was trying to make her way through the crowd, someone pushed her, making her ram into Ms. Dalton. You can dig all of this up by checking the airport's surveillance footage and verifying things with the program's crew," Angeline said.

"Are you pleading for mercy on your adoptive mother's behalf?" Ned asked.

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Chapter 20

Chapter 20

"This whole thing is just an accident. I hope you'll—"

"Ending up in bed with me was an accident; pushing Ingrid down the stairs was also an accident. Accidents happen to you quite often, don't they, Angeline?" Ned cut her off coldly, "Be at Regalia Hotel at 7:00 pm tomorrow.

"Explain this to my face. Otherwise, I'll make sure your adoptive mother spends the rest of her life in prison. You know me-I'm a man of my word." He hung up.

Angeline's mind was blank as she listened to the dial tone on the other end of the line. She was seriously starting to doubt whether she truly understood Ned. In fact, she wasn't sure whether Ned wanted her to be at the hotel tomorrow so she could actually explain, or so he could drug her.

Ned was infamous in Oceanford for being a bully, but he'd always treated her extremely well. The way he treated her and her love for him had formed a halo effect in her perception of him. She couldn't analyze the situation accurately because of that.

At that moment, her phone vibrated. Her gaze focused again as she answered the call.

"Angie, I've already asked Vanessa about the situation. Ingrid's doing quite well, so you don't need to worry about her. As long as she's fine, I don't think Ned will do anything to make life hard for Anne," Zachary said.

When Angeline didn't answer, he glanced at his phone doubtfully. "Hello? Angie?"..

"Thanks for going to the trouble," Angeline said. "Really."

"The things I said at the police station earlier... I'm sorry. Don't take it to heart," Zachary said.

"I know." Her tone was filled with exhaustion. "Could I ask you to represent Anne in court?" "Of course. I've eaten her cooking and stayed at her home before; I would've represented her even if you hadn't asked! Get some rest, okay? Anne will be fine. I'll talk to Ned about this."

After hanging up, Angeline tried and failed twice to stand up. She only managed to stagger to her feet after pushing herself off the bench. The night breeze mussed up her long tresses.

She stuffed it behind her ears and stared at the corridor where Ned and Tommy had stood earlier. Then, she slowly trudged out of the hospital.

+15 BÔNUS .

The next morning, Angeline was rudely awakened at 8:30 am by the ringing of her phone. She unplugged it from the charger and checked it. It was an unknown number.

She didn't return the call. She was about to put down the phone when it rang again. Her drowsiness mostly dissipated when she saw it was Ingrid calling. Angeline sat up and answered it.

"Angie." Ingrid's gentle voice rang out on the other end of the line. "I heard from Vanessa that you made a trip to the hospital last night."

"Are you okay?" Angeline asked.

"I'm fine. Vanessa told me that the woman who pushed me wasn't an anti-fan, that she's just your relative."

"She's the adoptive mother I had before going to the Fletcher family." Angeline didn't hide Anne's identity. She explained, "At the airport... she only made her way through the crowd because she saw Ned. She wasn't heading for you; someone pushed her."

"I know. I saw the video. I'm not calling to accuse you of anything, Angie." Ingrid paused, then continued, "I wanted to ask whether you and Ned have really divorced."

"Yeah."

After a short silence, Ingrid sighed. She sounded like she wanted to have a heart-to-heart with Angeline. "But I'm still scared. I love him and want to be with him, but I'm worried he'll remember your past together one day."

