

Chapter 4 Has Vivian Spent Time With Bryan In The Loun...

"The responsibility to purchase a house lies with you two," Eileen responded.

Judie's eyes brimmed with anger. The moment she realized Eileen was about to leave, she caught Eileen by the arm, her voice tinged with disbelief. "How can you even say that? Aren't you aware of your real family ties? You lavish care on a stepmother with your money, yet refuse to purchase a home for your own brother? Think about it. That woman's time is short, and soon, you'll find yourself leaning on Roderick, your brother!"

Eileen's lips curled into a mocking smile as she replied, "I'll lean on him? Isn't it supposed to be the other way around? I think you're mistaken. The money I earn is mine to spend as I please. If you want to keep your job here, mind your manners."

With a flick of her wrist, she freed herself from Judie's grasp and left, her expression icy.

A shiver of fear crept through Judie. After all, Eileen's influence was second only to Bryan's in the company.

But there was Eileen, with a cushy job under Bryan, driving a good car, dwelling in a spacious home, and even tending to her sick stepmother. Yet, she turned a blind eye to her brother's situation.

It just wasn't right!

With that notion in mind, Judie bolted to the restroom to call Roderick. They had to convince Eileen to buy them a house.

Meanwhile, Eileen returned to her desk, banishing all distractions, and her productivity soared.

Earlier, Vivian's interruption meant Eileen hadn't completed her tasks on time. Now, as the office emptied for lunch, Eileen remained in her seat to work.

Roderick's calls came twice. She ignored them both, so engrossed in her

work that lunchtime passed unnoticed. Soon, it was evening.

Her dedication had not gone unseen. Bryan had every reason to hold her in high regard, just as Vivian had remarked, for her diligence indeed outshone many.

"Isn't it time for you to get off work, Eileen?" Vivian's inquiry broke through the silence.

Eileen offered a faint smile, lifting her eyes, which inadvertently met Bryan's. He stood casual, one hand resting in his pocket, his gaze briefly meeting hers before shifting to the papers in front of her.

Leaning into Bryan with playful ease, Vivian teased, "I'm whisking Bryan away early. Maybe you'll get some rest."

Then, she turned to Bryan. "Are Eileen's tasks urgent? If not, perhaps she could tackle them tomorrow and get off work early today."

Bryan opened his mouth, his voice low but clear. "They're not urgent."

"Could she then knock off earlier?" Vivian gently tugged at Bryan's sleeve.

Eileen's lips parted, yet no word escaped her.

"You can leave now. The work can wait till tomorrow." Bryan tapped the desk lightly. The gesture seemed to resonate within Eileen.

Eileen found no pleasure in her chance to leave early since it had been Vivian who had convinced Bryan to do so. Somehow, she felt a tug to stay behind, to toil away into the night.

Yet, she rose, offered a nod, and responded with a touch of formality, "Yes, Mr. Dawson. Thank you, Miss Warren."


Vivian tugged Bryan away, pausing only to give a playful wink in Eileen's direction.

Sinking back into her seat, Eileen was lost in thought. What had Vivian and Bryan done inside the office? Had they ever stepped into the lounge?

Eileen furrowed her brow, battling the unwelcome tide of emotions and wandering thoughts she knew were futile.

After a while, she let out a sigh. After organizing the documents and with her belongings in hand, she left the company.

Departing early did little to expedite her journey. By the time Eileen

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reached the hospital, darkness had already embraced the city, neon signs flickering to life.

The outpatient entrance was desolate. She parked and made her way to the inpatient wing, a path well-trodden over the years as she attended to her ailing stepmother, Ruby Curtis.

Memories flooded back unbidden. A ten-year-old Eileen had been the quiet spectator of a bitter custody battle—not for her, but for Roderick.

Eventually, her father had lost.

Her life had taken a solitary turn after her mother had left with Roderick. Visits had ceased until two years prior, spurred by news of Eileen's success, and they came to seek her aid.

Her father, unable to keep his son, had grown distant and harsh towards Eileen, demanding she quit school. Her defiance had nearly cost her life, almost getting beaten to death by her father.

Ruby had been the lifeline in her youth, selling her possessions to ensure Eileen's education. Eileen had excelled academically, and Ruby had made plans for her early.

She had juggled multiple jobs when Eileen was in high school, eventually sending Eileen to the best university.

"You're right on time, Eileen. There's something we need to discuss," called out Dr. Emilio White, Ruby's primary doctor, as he approached Eileen.

Eileen offered a smile. "Please, Dr. White, go ahead."

With a backward glance at the ward, Emilio said in a hushed voice, "We should talk in my office."

Renowned in Onaland, Emilio was almost seventy, his age evident in the sparse hair that crowned his head.

Inside the office, Eileen remained standing as Emilio took his seat, the overhead light casting a glow on his head.

"We've got some new drugs recently that can treat your mother's illness. However, they are limited. Would you be interested?" Emilio said.

Eileen, known for her devotion, had prompted Emilio to share this immediately.

Eileen knitted her brows together in concern. "And... The cost?"

"It's double the price of the existing medication fee for your mother," Emilio replied.

After a pause, he added with candor, "The reality is stark. Without the new treatment, she has, at best, two years to live. With it, perhaps up to five."

Eileen's medical knowledge was limited, yet Emilio's clear briefing shed light on all she needed to know.

Investing more in Ruby's health would offer precious years—a decision she once would have made without a second thought.

But now, Vivian's return and the shaky ground of her marriage to Bryan cast a shadow over her financial security. The future held no promise of profit, and her position at work was on the line.

"Thank you, Dr. White. May I take a few days to consider this?" Eileen asked.

"Absolutely," Emilio replied. "It's not every day such a chance comes by. Think about it carefully."

Leaving the office, Eileen walked into Ruby's ward. It was no suite, yet it was more than comfortable, housing just another patient beside Ruby.

Ruby's expression was one of surprise as she saw Eileen. "Eileen, what brings you here? Why didn't you tell me in advance?" she said.

Usually, Eileen's visits would be scheduled in advance due to her demanding job, and Ruby would always wait for her instead of resting.

"I managed to leave work early today, so I thought I'd drop by," Eileen explained, placing her belongings aside and noting the other occupant of the room.

A woman, in the bloom of her life yet facing the trial of breast cancer, lay surrounded by a somber family.

"Sorry for interrupting this late," Eileen greeted them politely, acknowledging the shared space.

Leaving work early was a luxury for Eileen, yet for many, the day had already wound down, the ward's lights dimming in the evening calm.

The other patient offered a nod as a response, staying silent.

Eileen unfolded the cot as Ruby's voice, soft yet strained, reached her. "Eileen, it looks like you've lost some weight again. You don't need to work that hard."

"Being thin is good," Eileen replied with a slight smile. "That's the trend these days, isn't it?" With the bed made, she caught Ruby's gaze, her eyes rimmed with red.

The kind lines of Ruby's face bore the brunt of time, and a scar on her forehead spoke of a past fall due to exhaustion.

"Roxana's stopping her treatment. It's too much for her family to handle financially," Ruby said.

Ruby was talking about a patient from the Baker family she knew well, who was about seven years younger than her.

Ruby continued with a weary voice, "I'm thinking of stopping mine, too. It's incurable, and it's causing you so much pain. Just promise to look after Bailee. That'll be enough for me."

Ruby's journey had been tough. She had lost her first husband when her daughter, Bailee Brooks, was still young. Then, she had married Eileen's father, only to stumble into new hardships.

"Bailee and I are not bound by blood. I have no obligation there. You need to fight, for her sake," Eileen said.

But Ruby knew Eileen's intent; Eileen was only saying that to persuade her not to give up. Ruby sighed deeply.


"Keep on with this talk, and I won't visit you next time." With the bed ready, Eileen motioned for Ruby to rest. "Bailee knows I'll be here tonight. She'll come by in the morning. Now, you need your sleep."

Without a word, Ruby settled into the bed, succumbing to the needed rest.

Eileen knew what Ruby wanted to say; she understood Ruby.

But comforting others wasn't her strong suit. She was more adept at firm discussions than revealing her heart.

The thought of yielding to sentiment frightened her. It felt like inviting a crushing defeat.

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Hospital life was a constant ebb and flow, the perpetual sounds of activity disrupting any chance of peace. Her experiences with sleep here were always marred by unrest.

This time, she was roused not by the sun, but by the clamor of the nearby family preparing for breakfast.

Ruby's hushed voice reached Eileen's ears. "Could you please lower your voices? My daughter is still asleep."

The family responded without words, their volume softening in acknowledgment.

Eileen decided to get up, freshening up in the communal bathroom before fetching breakfast for Ruby.

As Eileen put the breakfast before Ruby, Ruby's curiosity broke the silence. "Eileen, are you seeing someone now?"

A fleeting image of Bryan crossed Eileen's mind. She was married, though not in the conventional sense.

But Ruby didn't know this. Eileen just smiled and shook her head. "No."

"At your age, many are pairing up, even tying the knot. It's time for you to do the same." Ruby looked at Eileen thoughtfully. "I once worked as a maid. The family's son, around your age, is running his own business now."