

Chapter 01 A Moribund Marriage

Dark clouds massed on the horizon and burst poured sheets of rain. On the bus Melanie leaned her head against window, feeling the slight vibration of raindrops pounding on the glass. It sent a chill on her left cheek, which was nowhere near as piercing as the chill in her heart. The doctor's words still lingered in the depth of her heart.

“Terminal cerebral cancer. I'm sorry, but you have three months left at most.”

With a few taps on the screen, she dialed that number in nervousness. An euphonic but nonchalant male voice sounded over the phone. “What's up?”

The diagnosis paper wrinkled as Melanie clenched her fist. Her mouth twisted into a wry smile. “Yeah, um... I'm just calling to ask if you can come back home tonight.”

“I think I've made it clear enough to you. Don't bother me with your trifles.”

His impatient statement was punctuated by a series of feeble moans, which obviously belonged to another woman. Melanie felt a rush of prick in her heart. Harder and harder her fingers pressed on the phone, and the color drained from her fingertips. In a trance she heard herself answered, "I'm sorry to bother you."

Unhesitatingly, the phone was hung up with a beep. Melanie still maintained a posture of holding the phone to her ear. She turned to glance at the reflection on window, only to see a tear-streaked face.

All the time, her husband, Everett Connors had been dedicated to show his dislikes for her by frequently hanging out with different women. Melanie, however had been making a pretence of ignorance of his scandals. Debunking the lies meant divorce and departure, while Melanie preferred to cherish her marriage that was doomed to end three months later.

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In Elgin Villa.

Melanie cooked up a rich dinner ahead of six o'clock, with eager anticipations for her husband coming home. They hired no servants or maids in Elgin Villa because Everett felt an antipathy against outsiders. Therefore, Melanie undertook nearly all household chores including cook, dishes, laundry, etc..

The hands of the clock crept slowly around. Each passing second took away the heat of food, the warmth of her heart. The long wait sent her a feeling of drowsiness. Melanie lay on the couch, half-sleep. She had been haunted by physical and mental fatigue these days, accompanied by a symptom of somnolence. But being a light sleeper, she kept having those grotesque dreams.

Once again, Melanie woke up with a start from a nightmare. She gasped, covering her chest to soothe herself. For a split second there was only darkness that she could see, but soon the light penetrated through the black

layer.

Everett's sullen face nearly touched her nose, so close that she could observe his face outline. It suddenly dawned on her that gentle, cheerful boy had grown into a mature but taciturn man.

Distress, bitterness and frustration flooded in her heart. Her pale lips parted. "Ever..."

Nonchalance occupied his eyes. He cupped her cheeks using his large, hot palms. His lips pressed vigorously against hers.

"Ah..." Melanie could taste the spiciness of wine in his mouth, which made her sick to her stomach. A drop of tear lingered on the corner of her eye, but she dared not push him away.

Finally the anguish in her heart overcame her fear and drove her to plead in a husky voice, "Don't..." She didn't like the rough way he touched her, especially when he had just touched another woman.

“Don’t?” Everett’s fingers slid in through the hem of her blouse. She could smell alcohol in his breath. “That’s not what you said when you crawled into my bed that day.”

His words drained Melanie of the strength to resist and dimmed her eyes. She was like still water with no any ripples. Her pale and expressionless face turned Everett off. He loosened his grip on her and went to the bathroom.

Melanie slumped on the cold floor. In the silence she could only hear the sound of dripping water in bathroom, as well as her own sobs.

Her crush on Everett started in her teenage, nearly ten years ago. Ten years couldn’t change her obsession with him, but it took away the gentle, caring boy.

Four years ago, Melanie’s cousin, Vivian Jacob was engaged to Everett. But someone drugged Melanie and plotted her sleeping together with Everett. Vivian left in rage and when she returned to this city, she was already

another man's wife.

Last time Everett presented his crude side was when he got the news of Vivian's marriage. What was the reason for his behavior today?

The sound of water ended out of blue. Melanie had readjusted her clothes and sat on the couch. On the table was a glass of water for Everett as usual.

Everett stepped out the bathroom in his bathrobe. His gaze drifted from that glass of water to Melanie's face. He boomed, "She's divorced."