

Trapped in Love

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Paying Debts

Reuben left without a word, and Caroline slumped into her chair. She covered her face with her hands to hide the sadness that threatened to consume her.

Evan's actions made it clear that he had no intention of keeping her as his personal secretary, now that the person he truly cared about was back. It was time for her to accept that she was merely a substitute.

Buzz—

Her thoughts were interrupted by the buzzing of her phone on the desk. It was her mother's attending doctor, Scott Wilson.

Caroline anxiously answered the call. "Dr. Wilson, is something wrong with my mother?"

"Caroline, do you have time to come to the hospital now?" Scott replied.

Hearing Dr. Wilson's tone, Caroline quickly stood up, her heart racing. "Yes, I'll be right there!"

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Twenty minutes later, Caroline arrived at the hospital entrance wearing only a simple shirt.

Sneezing from the cold wind as she got out of the car at the hospital entrance, Caroline hurriedly ran towards the inpatient building.

As she stepped out of the elevator, she was surprised to see a man in a leather jacket standing in front of her mother's ward, smoking a cigarette and talking to her mother's attending doctor, Scott Wilson, in a roguish manner.

Caroline clenched her fists and walked over quickly.

The sound of her footsteps made Dr. Wilson and the man turn around.

The man smirked when he saw Caroline. “Yo, the great secretary, Caroline, has finally decided to show up!”

Caroline gave Dr. Wilson an apologetic look before addressing the man with a cold tone. “Clay, I’ve already made it clear. Even if you’re looking to harass me for money, don’t ever come to my mother’s ward.”

Clay Davis bit the cigarette in his mouth and replied, “Your father’s disappeared. Who else can we turn to for the money, if not your mother?”

Suppressing her anger, Caroline asked, “How much do you want this time?”

“Not much. Only 4,000 dollars, including interest,” Clay replied.

Caroline’s expression soured. “It was only 2,000 dollars last month!”

Clay scrutinized Caroline with a cold smile. “Then you’ll have to ask your father what else he did to rack up the debt. The IOU is here, and you know your father’s handwriting. I’m just here to collect the money that’s owed to me.”

He produced the IOU and showed it to Caroline.

Although Caroline seethed with anger, she couldn’t find a way to refute his claim.

Caroline’s father’s relentless gambling addiction had driven him to borrow money regularly, and she had always been the one to shoulder the burden of paying off his debts. Despite her tireless efforts, his debts seemed to only multiply, leaving her vulnerable to the menacing loan sharks who would invade her mother’s hospital ward and cause trouble.

Knowing her mother's delicate condition, Caroline made a difficult decision to suppress her boiling rage, opting not to create a scene. "Fine, I'll give you the money this time. But if you ever dare to set foot in this hospital again, don't expect a single cent from me."

With a heavy sigh, Caroline pulled out her phone and retrieved Clay's bank details, then proceeded to transfer 4,000 dollars to him.

With the payment received, Clay nodded curtly and made a graceful exit.

Dr. Wilson looked at Caroline with concern. "Caroline, you can't keep doing this. Eventually, all of this pressure is going to take a toll on you."

Caroline's smile was tinged with bitterness. "He's still my father, though."

Scott noticed Caroline's complexion gradually paling, and his brow furrowed with worry. "Are you feeling unwell?"

"I'm fine," she insisted, shaking her head, but a wave of dizziness nearly caused her to lose her balance.

Scott instinctively reached out to steady her, hesitating for a moment as his palm met her feverish skin. "Caroline, don't you realize you have a fever?"

His typically gentle and composed expression now carried a rare hint of reprimand.

Pulling away from him, Caroline touched her burning face. "I've been too preoccupied with work to notice. I'll take some medicine later. Thank you, Dr. Wilson, for your concern, but right now, I need to go see my mother."

With that, she walked past Scott and entered the ward.

In the ward, Caroline's heart ached when she saw her mother's sallow face, weakened by illness.

She blinked back tears and composed herself before stepping forward. “Mom, are you done with the drip today?”

On the bed, Katie Lloyd slowly turned to face Caroline, her expression filled with pain. “I’m sorry to trouble you again with your father’s gambling debts.”

Caroline smiled nonchalantly and poured some warm water into Katie’s glass. “Mom, you haven’t troubled me at all. We’re family. It’s only natural for us to help each other.”

The more sensible Caroline was, the more anxious Katie felt.

After a moment of silence, she said, “Carol, leave this family.”

Caroline’s hand, holding the glass, froze in midair. “Please don’t say such things. You’re my mother. I can’t abandon you.”

“Would you rather be dragged down by your father’s debts?!” Katie suddenly blurted out, her agitation evident.

Pretending to be relaxed, Caroline smiled and said, “Mom, I’m earning a decent salary now. You and Dad raised me, and it’s my turn to take care of you both.”

Katie frowned and said sternly, “Taking care of us and sacrificing your life are two entirely different things! I know my situation. My time is limited. Listen to me, my child. Break away from this family and cut off all ties with us!”

“Mom!” Caroline grasped Katie’s hand anxiously. “I promise you I’m fine, and I’ll take good care of myself, alright?”

Katie looked into Caroline’s tear-filled eyes and felt her heart wrench. She couldn’t bear the thought of her daughter carrying such a heavy burden alone.

However, she knew all too well about her husband’s unyielding gambling addiction. He seemed trapped in an endless cycle of accumulating debts, like a bottomless pit, and showed no signs of change.

Frustrated, Katie closed her eyes, taking a deep breath before letting out a long sigh. “Carol, there’s something important I need to tell you.”