

Chapter 10 Morning Sickness

Joelle stood up and washed her face after a bout of vomiting.

Lately, she had been experiencing morning sickness. When she was on an empty stomach in the morning and caught a whiff of oil or smoke, she tended to feel a bit nauseous. The rest of the day, however, remained uneventful for her.

Keaton's routine involved early departures and late returns, rarely sharing meals at the same table with Joelle. Consequently, he remained oblivious to any abnormalities in her behavior.

Moments later, Joelle emerged from the bathroom, her gaze meeting Keaton's somber expression. It dawned on her that she hadn't shared the news of her pregnancy. Before she could speak, his cold voice cut through. "Joelle, spare yourself the embarrassment."

Embarrassment?

Did he interpret her pregnancy symptoms as a display of vulnerability?

Joelle, momentarily taken aback, responded with a self-mocking smile.

"Don't concern yourself," she replied, averting her gaze. "I'm fine. Focus on Elsie instead."

He didn't care about her at all. Whether she was pregnant or not held no significance for him.

The baby's existence remained inconsequential to everyone else.

Keaton observed her profile, still as pale as before, though noticeably thinner. He contemplated saying something but ultimately opted for silence.

Lowering his gaze, Keaton turned away.

"Oh, and," Joelle suddenly said, "return home early tonight."

Keaton halted, glancing back at her.

"It's not for my sake," Joelle declared, locking eyes with him. "Elsie desires more of your time. If you wish to be with her, be good to her."

Keaton's fists tightened, fingernails digging into his palms as an indescribable emotion surged within him.

"Understood," he replied before turning away and departing.

As Keaton exited, Joelle gazed towards a spot in the house and uttered, "Make sure to return early for her. I've arranged something special."

Nightfall left only Elsie and Joelle in the confines of the house.

Once the dishes adorned the table, Joelle guided Elsie to the dining room in her wheelchair.

Surveying the table, Elsie impatiently tossed her tableware, exclaiming, "You got only this garbage for me?"

Maintaining a composed demeanor, Joelle said, "Miss Rowe, the chef here has crafted these dishes under Keaton's guidance, tailored to your preferences. If they don't suit your taste, simply inform Keaton, and he'll make suitable arrangements."

Elsie retorted vehemently, "I lose my appetite just looking at your face. Who do you think you are? Do you believe you're worthy of Keaton?"

Her eyes gleamed with excitement. She was anticipating Joelle's retaliation.

The servants in the villa, whom she had bribed, were all positioned outside, watching intently. If they witnessed Joelle losing it and reported it to Keaton, it would likely intensify his resentment toward Joelle.

Calmly, Joelle declared, "In that case, I'll dine outside while you enjoy your meal."

With that, she turned on her heel and exited the room.

Fuming with anger, Elsie abruptly spun the wheelchair around and pursued Joelle. Her words dripped with venom. "Don't avoid me. You

shameless bitch. Keaton will surely divorce you. Just wait and see."

Joelle glanced at her mobile phone's screen, displaying the door's surveillance footage with Keaton's arrival. Her eyes glinted with determination. She faced Elsie with a cold stare and retorted, "Miss Rowe, mind your words. Keaton and I are lawfully married, and you are the intruder here. If you continue behaving like this, I won't hesitate to kick you out."

"Haha!" Elsie scoffed with disdain. "Keaton loves me. You wouldn't dare kick me out."

"Certainly, I dare!"

As she spoke, Joelle intentionally guided the wheelchair toward the door.

"Joelle, have you lost your mind?" Elsie, a mix of shock and anger, rose and made a threatening gesture toward Joelle.

In that moment, Keaton swung the door open, entering the house with a bewildered expression on his face.

A sudden dread engulfed Elsie as she grasped Joelle's shoulder, forcing a smile at Keaton. "Keaton, I can stand now... ah!"

Feigning instability, Elsie dramatically collapsed to the floor with a scream.

Joelle responded with a scornful sneer.

Elsie's choice to dance seemed ill-considered. Perhaps she should have pursued acting.

Recovering from his initial surprise, Keaton approached and assisted Elsie to her feet. "Be careful! Your legs haven't fully healed. You shouldn't be standing. What if you injure yourself again?"

Clutching Keaton's sleeve tightly, Elsie sighed. "I just wanted to test if I could stand. I don't want to be confined to a wheelchair forever."

"Don't speak like that. You'll recover," Keaton reassured, giving Elsie a comforting pat on the arm. As he turned to Joelle, his expression turned icy. "You are supposed to take care of her. Do you realize how risky it was

just now?"

Hurt and donning a sarcastic sneer, Joelle retorted, "Keaton, her legs have healed. She intentionally fell for your sympathy."

Joelle strategically timed Elsie's actions, ensuring Keaton witnessed her standing. Yet he remained unconvinced of her recovery. Did his trust and affection for Elsie cloud his judgment so significantly?

Wearing a pained expression, Elsie sought solace in Keaton's embrace. "Why are you treating me like this, Joelle? Keaton accompanied me to the hospital recently for an examination. My legs are still in recovery. I didn't intend to burden you."

"Don't justify your negligence, Joelle. She may be kind, but that doesn't give you the right to mistreat her!" Keaton's tone was cold and stern.


Disregarding Keaton, Joelle fixed a cold gaze on Elsie and said, "Miss Rowe, I'll ask once more. Can you genuinely not stand?"

Elsie, feigning greater distress, nodded with teary eyes. "I attempted, but standing proved elusive. I long to dance and return to the stage. Joelle, I understand you didn't intentionally harm me, but I..."

Sneering, Joelle retrieved her phone. Displaying the screen to Keaton and Elsie, she said, "Miss Rowe, observe closely and comprehend what's on the screen!"

Elsie scrutinized the screen for a moment, and her countenance abruptly shifted.



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Chapter 11 Scheming

It was the surveillance footage capturing Elsie alone at home, showcasing her unhindered movements and freedom of action. Her legs displayed no signs of impairment.

The moment Joelle returned, Elsie promptly got back to her wheelchair, donning an aggrieved expression.

A pallor washed over Elsie's face, and beads of cold sweat formed.

Joelle, maintaining a frigid gaze, inquired, "Miss Rowe, care to explain yourself?"

Trembling lips and tear-filled eyes conveyed Elsie's portrayal of victimhood, as if she had endured a profound injustice.

A sudden darkness clouded Keaton's countenance. Snatching the phone, he watched the video and then leveled an accusing gaze at Joelle. "You installed surveillance at home? How devious can you be?"

"Keaton, can't you see the truth? Elsie's legs are perfectly fine. She's been feigning paralysis, deceiving us!" Joelle, initially taken aback, burst into laughter, fueled by anger.

Three years of marriage had bestowed on Joelle a deep understanding of Keaton. Aware of his aversion to deception and betrayal, she strategically placed the surveillance camera to reveal Elsie's true nature to him.

Despite the undeniable evidence, Keaton directed his blame at Joelle for installing surveillance in their home.

True to expectations, Keaton viewed Elsie through a different lens. Even in the face of deception, he perceived her as innocent.

Elsie's eyes betrayed a subtle satisfaction. With a feigned sadness, she spoke. "Joelle, I never anticipated you would resort to this. I can feel my

legs and manage to walk a bit now. I concealed it from Keaton because I wanted it to be a surprise for him on my birthday. I truly didn't have any ulterior motives."

Joelle, caught off guard by Elsie's ability to concoct excuses in such a situation, felt anger wash over her, rendering her pale. "You..."

"Enough!" Keaton returned the phone to Joelle's hand and said icily, "That's it! Joelle, get rid of all the cameras in the house!"

The mere thought that everything in the house might have been photographed made him feel uneasy.

Clutching Keaton's arm firmly, Elsie offered a gentle plea. "Keaton, don't be upset. Joelle, apologize to him now. He'll forgive you!"

Joelle, repulsed by Elsie's smug demeanor, felt a wave of nausea and hastily retreated to the bathroom, her hand pressed against her mouth.

"Joelle, are you alright?" Elsie feigned concern for Joelle, then turned her gaze to Keaton, adopting a coy tone. "My birthday is next Wednesday, Keaton. Can you stay with me on that day?"

She needed to orchestrate everything flawlessly for that day, sleeping with him and ensuring Keaton's commitment to marriage. After that, Joelle would have to depart from this place.

Keaton withdrew his arm, casting a cold and reproachful gaze upon Elsie, an expression she had not witnessed from him before.

An unease gripped Elsie's heart, and she adopted a pitiful look, gently biting her lip. She whispered, "Are you upset because I kept it from you? I didn't intend to. I..."

"Elsie." Keaton's tone turned stern as he cut her off. "You need to grasp one thing. I will never divorce Joelle, no matter what. So, don't try any schemes, got it?"

The sound of Joelle retching echoed from the bathroom. Keaton furrowed his brow, pondering her persistent vomiting. Did she, like him, suffer from gastritis?

He had previously advised her to resign from her hospital job. The

demanding nature of the work, coupled with night shifts, impacted her eating habits. How could she endure such strain? Yet, she was remarkably stubborn.

"But... but you didn't scold me just now..." Elsie never expected Keaton to treat her this way. She was taken aback.

Keaton glanced towards the bathroom and said in a hushed tone, "I didn't reprimand you earlier because installing surveillance cameras at home is indeed wrong—it's a breach of privacy. However, your approach wasn't right either. If you wanted to surprise me, you should have informed Joelle about your recovery and spared her unnecessary strain."

Despite his efforts to shield Elsie, Keaton maintained his own principles, considering himself a fair individual. Yet he failed to consider Joelle's perspective on this matter.

"Keaton, you no longer want me?" Elsie, taking two steps back, clung to her clothes, sobbing pitifully. "You promised to care for me for the rest of my life. I can't bear the thought of other women around you. I can't live without you."

The situation took an unfavorable turn. How could Keaton stand up for Joelle? Had he developed feelings for her?

She couldn't allow that to happen. In any case, she needed to win Keaton over from Joelle.