

## Chapter 8 Stepping On Her Hand

Elsie had spent over half a month in the hospital, and her condition had stabilized. Upon her request, Keaton assisted her in leaving the hospital and returning to the villa for recovery.

In the morning, Joelle prepared breakfast. Once Keaton had finished his meal and departed for company, she proceeded to assist Elsie in washing her face and having breakfast.

Seated in a wheelchair with her right leg encased in plaster, Elsie lacked freedom of movement, necessitating Joelle's assistance in her care.

In the past few days, in Keaton's presence, Elsie appeared frail and pitiable. Initially, Keaton would offer comfort, but gradually, he grew increasingly indifferent, and Elsie's anxiety escalated.

Observing these occurrences, Joelle couldn't help but feel amused.

Joelle brought a cup of milk for Elsie.

Glancing at the milk, Elsie abruptly seized the cup and hurled it at Joelle.

The cup tumbled to the floor, shattering into pieces, and the milk splattered all over Joelle.

In Keaton's absence, Elsie made no effort to conceal her disdain for Joelle. Daily, there were incidents of humiliation and mistreatment.

"Ah!" Joelle winced in pain, her face paling with anger. "Miss Rowe, what is the meaning of this?"

Elsie stared at Joelle and declared, "I detest milk. I desire coffee. Did you intentionally bring me something I dislike?"

Attempting to suppress her frustration, Joelle said, "Miss Rowe, coffee's

not good for your sleep, and you shouldn't have coffee."

"I want coffee!" Elsie exclaimed eagerly.

Following a brief silence, Joelle crouched down to gather the broken cup pieces.

A malicious gleam surfaced in Elsie's eyes as she deliberately stepped forcefully on Joelle's hand.

The pain was intense, causing Joelle to disregard her bleeding hand from the shattered cup. She clutched Elsie's foot and exclaimed, "Elsie, your leg..."

Elsie intended to kick Joelle away, but upon spotting Keaton's entrance, she purposefully toppled from the wheelchair. Pretending to be scared and remorseful, she cried out, "I'm sorry, Joelle. Breaking the cup was unintentional. My hand was feeble. Please don't be upset. I'll take care of the mess immediately!"

Joelle seized Elsie's arm, questioning, "Have you been feigning paralysis?"

Keaton approached swiftly, lifting Joelle up. "What's happening here?"

Tears filled Joelle's eyes as she exclaimed, "Her legs are functional. She's fine. She deliberately stepped on my hand."

Keaton furrowed his brow, stating, "She's paralyzed; she can't feel anything. How could she have stepped on your hand?"

With a smug expression in her eyes, Elsie feigned wiping away tears and remarked, "Joelle, why are you saying that? If you don't want to take care of me, I won't force you. Please don't deceive Keaton about me."

Joelle shuddered involuntarily, displaying her injured hand to Keaton. "Keaton! She stepped on my hand. She..."

Observing her bleeding hand, Keaton uttered coldly, "You resorted to such a scheme to incriminate her. You're a doctor, right? Your hands should be the most precious to you, shouldn't they? Why would you do something like this? It's absurd!"

Though she was torn inside, Joelle's eyes reflected determination as she

confronted Keaton. "Do you think I'm acting? Keaton, is this the person you see me as? Elsie's legs are fine; she's pretending to be paralyzed. If you doubt me, take her to the hospital."

Joelle's resolute tone prompted Keaton to glance at Elsie involuntarily, a hint of doubt flickering in his eyes.

Gripping Keaton's hand firmly, Elsie shook her head fearfully. "Keaton, I haven't lied to you. I don't want to undergo an examination. I don't want them to inspect my legs. I'm disabled now. I don't want..."

Before completing her sentence, Elsie abruptly lost consciousness.

Keaton's expression shifted. "Elsie!"

Keaton lifted Elsie and exited the room, paying no attention to Joelle.

Joelle was seated on the floor with a pallid countenance. Her hand continued to bleed from the wound.

Keaton had unwavering confidence in himself and dismissed every word she uttered.

Following a brief period of sitting, Joelle gathered herself, stood up, and fetched the medicine box to tend to her injured hand, disinfecting and bandaging the wound.

Even by eleven o'clock in the evening, Keaton and Elsie had not returned. She made a call to Keaton but he rejected it, so Joelle succumbed to sleep.

## Chapter 9 Let's Marry

Keaton returned at one in the morning. Quietly pushing open the bedroom door, he gazed at Joelle's pallid sleeping face with a complex expression.

After a brief pause, Keaton settled silently on the bed's edge, attempting to reach for Joelle's face. However, a sudden surge of pain filled his eyes before he could make contact. Clenching his teeth, he hastily withdrew his hand and stood up, heading out swiftly.

Joelle was jolted awake by the sound of the closing door. She sat up abruptly and exclaimed, "Keaton!"

The room was empty.

A bitter smile played on Joelle's lips.

He was currently at the hospital with Elsie. How could he be here?

She pondered whether it was time to accept the inevitability of divorce. What else was there to hold on to?

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Around noon the following day, Keaton returned with Elsie, flinging a test report at Joelle.

"Read it! Elsie's legs haven't shown any improvement. What more do you have to say?" Keaton's gaze dropped, concealing his expression from Joelle.

He also wished that Elsie wasn't paralyzed, but unfortunately, circumstances unfolded contrary to his hopes.

Joelle, without glancing at the test report, remarked indifferently, "Apologies for the misunderstanding. My wish was simply for Miss Rowe's swift recovery."

She had suspected that Elsie, daring to feign paralysis, had likely



conspired with the doctor to deceive any examination.

Joelle believed it wouldn't be challenging to unveil the deception given the right opportunity.

Elsie, her face pallid and eyes filled with fear, seized one of Keaton's hands, pleading, "Keaton, don't blame Joelle. It's my fault. Maybe you shouldn't have her take care of me. Hiring a caregiver would be just as effective."

Luckily, she had preemptively arranged everything, preventing Keaton from discovering the deception.

Of course, she didn't plan to perpetuate the charade. Once she ousted Joelle and secured Keaton, there would be no reason to feign paralysis. Her goal was to elegantly stand by Keaton's side, evoking envy from everyone.

Keaton directed his gaze at Elsie and remarked, "Elsie, you're overly considerate of others. Since Joelle caused this situation, she should be the one to care for you. Everyone must face the consequences of their actions."

"Mr. Gordon is correct. Each person must face the consequences of their actions." Joelle smiled. While speaking, she shot a chilly look at Elsie.

Elsie's complexion paled, and she felt discomfort. She managed a forced smile and uttered, "Thank you for looking after me, Joelle."

Wearing a faint smile, Joelle responded, "It's not a big deal."

Elsie suddenly detected an odd expression in Joelle's eyes, causing her heart to race. A sense of foreboding crept in.

Had Joelle discovered something?

She urgently needed to devise a plan to expel Joelle from Keaton's life.

Joelle gathered her soiled garments and headed to the washing machine.

Keaton transported Elsie to the bedroom, gently placing her on the bed. As he prepared to rise, she abruptly embraced him. He frowned and

instructed, "Let go."

Clinging to him, Elsie said with anticipation, "Keaton, let's marry. I've waited for three years. I don't want to wait any longer!"

Wearing a dissatisfied expression, Keaton disengaged Elsie's hand, offering patient reassurance. "Don't overthink it. Focus on your well-being. My grandpa is still in the ICU, and his condition is fluctuating. I don't have the energy for anything else at the moment."

"It's fine. We can get married first and plan the wedding later." Elsie sneered inwardly. If the old man weren't on the verge of death, she wouldn't have returned.

If he hadn't stopped them from getting married and arranged for someone to deal with her, she wouldn't have left the country.

"Let's discuss it later. There's a lot happening at work. We'll talk later." Joelle's pale countenance and sorrowful eyes flashed in Keaton's mind, triggering an inexplicable irritability.

Joelle had leveraged the fact that she had saved his father to make his father agree to their marriage. He harbored only disdain for her and had no other sentiments.

However, upon learning of her intention to divorce, he felt no sense of relief; instead, an unsettling unease settled in.

Once they were divorced, there would be no one to tend to him. Regardless of how late he returned, there wouldn't be anyone awaiting him with a warm meal.

Over the past three years, he had seemingly regarded Joelle as a mere maid. It wasn't until she expressed a desire for divorce that he realized the true nature of their relationship.

A maid could be replaced, but what if Joelle left for good?

Elsie had intended to say more, but upon witnessing the shift in Keaton's demeanor, she realized she shouldn't press him too much. Consequently, she nodded agreeably and stated, "Okay. I'll listen to you and avoid causing any trouble."

Keaton remained silent. His assistant called, informing him of an important document in the company requiring his signature. He turned and left. As he descended the stairs, he heard the sound of someone retching from the bathroom.



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