

Chapter 8

After some time, Jayde Rosario heard the roar of a car engine outside. She looked out the window and saw that Brendan Maynard had driven away with Chloe Ellis. She calmly looked away from the window, curled up on her bed, and hugged herself tightly.

The next morning, her phone rang, breaking the silence in her room. The screen displayed 'Mom'. Jayde hesitated for a moment before answering.

"Mom..."

She had barely spoken when her mother, Glenna Taylor's, angry voice came through the phone. "Brendan and I were traveling for a month, and you cause a scandal like this. Your brother is getting married, and you're still trying to climb into his bed! Jayde Rosario, do you have no shame? Get out of there! Don't live with your brother anymore!"

A wave of immense sorrow washed over Jayde. When she was little, her family had gone bankrupt. Her parents divorced. Her father went to California, and her mother remarried into the Maynard family, bringing her along.

Her mother always said she was a burden. She said that because of Jayde, she couldn't have another child with Mr. Maynard. Over the years, her mother had rarely shown any care for her. The only two times she had actively 'cared' were to blame her.

Once, when she confessed to Brendan, her mother had called and screamed at her, calling her shameless.

Today, her mother was accusing her of climbing into Brendan's bed, saying she had no shame.

"Mom, you didn't even ask what happened. You're just certain I was the one who initiated it?" Jayde asked, her voice trembling.

The phone was silent for a moment. Then her mother's disgusted voice came again. "We're both women. Don't think I don't know what you're thinking! If you affect my standing in the Maynard family, you can go find your dad!"

After saying that, her mother hung up.

The black screen of the phone reflected Jayde's lost and haggard face. She bit her lip hard, refusing to let the tears fall.

Looking at the word 'Mom' on her phone's contact list, she thought silently, Mom, don't worry. This daughter you dislike will completely leave the Maynard family, and you, in just 4 days.

For the next few days, Brendan didn't come home. Jayde was busy with her own preparations for going abroad and didn't pay any attention to where he and Chloe had gone.

Until 11:59 PM on August 24th. One minute before Brendan's birthday.

Jayde opened her social media and clicked on the only contact she had pinned. But after staring at the screen for a long time, she closed the chat. This was the first time in ten years she hadn't wished him a happy birthday.

At 8:00 AM the next morning, a flight reminder popped up on her phone.

[Ms. Jayde Rosario, your flight will depart in 14 hours. Please arrive at the airport two hours in advance to complete check-in.]

She calculated the time. She had only 12 hours left before she had to leave.

She found herself opening her social media again. She saw a new post from Chloe Ellis.

[The sunrise by the sea is beautiful. Looking forward to the sunset and you this evening.]

The post included a photo of her and Brendan holding hands at a place called Rose Coast.

Jayde's eyelashes fluttered. Her heart was calmer than she had expected.

At that moment, Chloe sent her a direct message.

[Your brother wants to spend his birthday alone with me this year. I hope you won't disturb us.]

Below the text was a 10-second video. In the video, Brendan was wearing a bathrobe, lying on a large, couple's-themed waterbed in a hotel room. Chloe was lying beside him, her shoulder exposed from under the blanket, covered in ambiguous red marks.

Jayde didn't need to think to know what kind of passionate night they had just had.

She just twitched her lips, quietly exited the social media app, and then began to reconfirm and clear out all of her belongings in the house.

4 hours left.

Jayde took the entire sketchpad from her drawer and tore her drawings of Brendan into tiny pieces, one by one. The shredded paper went into the trash can, and the memories in her mind were cleared out, bit by bit.

3 hours left.

She threw out all her remaining personal items in the house, leaving no trace that she had ever lived there.

2 hours left.

She took the Totoro nightlight from her bedside table and placed it on the living room coffee table. She put it on top of the drawing she had made of Brendan and Chloe. It would be her last wedding gift to him, from his sister.

When she was eight, Brendan had been a light in her life. But from now on, she would be her own light.

Because she was a sunflower, no longer someone's rose.

1 hour left.

She left a small message in the bottom right corner of the sketch.

[Brendan, happy birthday. Let's part ways here. We have no further connection.]

[I wish you all the best in a future without me.]

Birds and fish travel different paths. Mountains and rivers will not meet again.

After that, Jayde picked up her phone. She deleted Brendan and Chloe Ellis as friends and deactivated her social media account. Then she did a full factory reset on her phone, erasing everything.

The whole process was done without a single moment of hesitation.

Having done all that, Jayde took one last look at the home she had lived

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 +120 Points at most

in for ten years.

Then she turned and headed straight for the airport.

The plane roared into the sky.

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