

## Chapter 3

On my way home, my phone rang. It was Mike.

"Ava, what's the meaning of this? It's just a necklace. Do you really have to make such a fuss? When did you become so petty?"

His tone was sharp, almost scolding.

Before I could respond, Lucy's voice, trembling with feigned guilt, chimed in, "Ava, I'm sorry. It's just... Mike treats me so well. I shouldn't have posted that photo online. I'm really sorry."

In the background, I heard Mike's quiet murmur as he comforted her, "Don't mind her. She's always like this, blowing up over trivial things."

The line went dead before I had the chance to say a word.

The cab driver seemed to sense the tension. To break the awkward silence, he turned on some music and stole a glance at me through the rearview mirror.

"My fiancé played boyfriend for someone else and even took her to a banquet," I said calmly.

The driver froze for a moment, then offered an awkward laugh. "Uh... well, that doesn't seem right..."

Even strangers could see the absurdity of it, yet Mike remained oblivious. I couldn't help but let out a bitter laugh.

When I arrived home, Mike was already there. His expression was cold as he turned to me.

"Why were you at the hospital today? And where have you been these past two days?"

Before I could answer, the bedroom door swung open. Lucy stepped out.

"Ava, please don't be upset about today. I'll talk to Mike. It's all my fault. He shouldn't have lost his temper with you."

Her words drained any desire I had to respond. My gaze shifted to her—draped in one of my pajamas. I waited for an explanation.

Mike didn't even spare me a glance. Instead, he said flatly, "Lucy just got back to the country. It's not safe for a young woman to stay elsewhere, so she'll stay here for now."

He cast me a sidelong look. "Besides, you can't wear your old clothes anymore. Why not just give them to Lucy?"

It felt as though my heart sank to the ocean floor, weighted and aching. Without a word, I turned to head upstairs.

My silence seemed to catch Mike off guard. He stepped forward, blocking my path.

"Why are you acting like this? I'm not saying anything unreasonable. You weren't this petty before," he said, his tone almost admonishing.

"Lucy returned alone. If I don't take care of her, who will? And you're carrying my child. We're going to get married anyway."

His words, spoken so matter-of-factly, struck me with their hollowness. Instinctively, I rested my hand on my stomach, his patronizing tone almost too much to bear.

Seeing my expression, his gaze softened briefly. He reached out as if to take my hand, but before he could, Lucy's voice, tinged with a sob, cut through the air.

"It's all my fault, Mike. I never meant to hurt your relationship," she said, her tears perfectly timed. "If my presence is unwelcome, I'll leave."

With that, she spun around and ran toward the door.

Mike's face darkened. Gripping my arm, he barked, "Come with me to apologize to Lucy. If anything happens to her today, I won't forgive you!"