

Chapter 4

I raised my voice in defiance. "She ran off on her own! What does that have to do with me? Why should I apologize?"

Mike didn't bother to acknowledge my words. Instead, he yanked me toward the door.

The sharp pain in my abdomen forced me to clutch at it, and the flood of frustration and despair that had been simmering within finally broke free.

We had barely stepped outside when I saw Lucy sprawled in the middle of the road. Her eyes were red-rimmed, brimming with a pitiable sadness as she gazed at Mike.

Without hesitation, he rushed to her, cradling her as though she were some fragile treasure.

Then he turned to me, his expression dark and unforgiving. "Apologize."

I stared at him in disbelief, unable to comprehend the absurdity of it.

Lucy leaned against him, her tears shimmering but not falling. "Mike, please don't. I'm fine. Really."

His anger flared, and before I could react, he kicked me hard in the stomach.

"Are you mute? If you don't apologize to Lucy today, this isn't over."

With that, he scooped her up in his arms and carried her back inside. He didn't spare me even a glance as he threw his final words over his shoulder. "Since you're so evil, stay out here and reflect on yourself."

The door slammed shut in front of me.

He didn't know I'd already lost the baby. In his mind, I was still carrying his child.

The biting wind lashed at my face as I sank to the ground. The cold seeped through the earth, chilling me to my core. I felt as though I'd been plunged into an icy abyss, numb and devoid of warmth.

All my hopes, every last one, vanished.

Only a single thought remained: I had to leave.

I began walking down the roadside, the wind cutting against me, stripping away the last remnants of my strength. Somewhere along the way, I stumbled and fell, unable to summon the energy to rise again.

At some point, a blurry figure approached and helped me into a car. My consciousness wavered as the sound of the wind and snow faded into silence.

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Inside the house, Mike gently laid Lucy down on the sofa. Once she was settled, he exhaled a breath of relief. But an unshakable sense of fear and emptiness crept into his chest.

Ava was still outside. She would give in eventually—he was certain of that. He'd teach her a lesson, let her cool down for a while, and then bring her back in.

He was firm in his resolve. She had to understand that he cared for her, too.

Satisfied with his plan, Mike shifted his focus back to Lucy. Tonight, she seemed particularly fragile. Her reddened eyes filled with tears as she clung to his sleeve.

"Mike, I was so scared. I thought you'd abandoned me. No one treats me as well as you do. Could you stay with me? Just for tonight?"

Her trembling voice and vulnerable demeanor made him falter.

"I know you and Ava will get married," she continued, her tone soft, almost pleading. "You'll have decades together. But just for tonight, can't you stay with me? Just tonight."

Mike sighed, torn, but eventually relented. "All right. Whatever you want. Go to sleep—I'll stay with you."

His hesitation faded. Ava was right outside. Nothing could happen to her. She could wait until morning.

With that thought, he and Lucy lay down together.

But the quiet didn't last long. His phone buzzed, shattering the stillness.

The voice on the other end was urgent.

"Are you Ava Miller's family? She recently suffered a miscarriage and was found unconscious on the roadside. She's just been admitted to our hospital."

Mike froze, then sat up with a jolt.

"A miscarriage? When?"