

Scarlett's POV:

I checked the time again and sighed. It had been one and a half hours since I flew in, and I had lost count of the times I had glanced at my watch. My husband, Charles Moore, was nowhere to be found. He was supposed to pick me up from the airport. But he must be with his girlfriend right now. I shook my head and smiled bitterly at the thought, stood up, and dragged myself and my luggage out of the airport.

I married Charles three years ago. But shortly after our wedding, I received some good news from my dream university abroad. I was accepted to one of their programs, so I left to study there. Charles and I

had not seen each other for three years. While I was away, he was spending all his time with the woman he truly loved.

Now, I was finally finished with my studies and I came back home. I wanted to end our nominal marriage. I decided it was time for me to stop hoping for things that would never happen.

On my way home in a cab, I sent Charles a message that read, "We need to talk."

Before long, I was standing inside our empty house. I set my luggage aside and headed to the living room. I sat on the sofa and waited. The house looked and smelled like no one had lived in it for years. Our wedding photo was still hanging on the wall. It offended and saddened me at the same time.

I glanced at my phone. Charles still had not replied. I

guessed that maybe he would not be home tonight.

But I just sat there for a long time and immersed myself in my thoughts. Then, I heard a car pull over outside. I shot up from my seat, feeling my heart break into a gallop. Did I still expect anything of my stone-hearted husband? Maybe. Maybe not. But at the last moment, I gnashed my teeth together and clasped my trembling hands. I reminded myself, 'I'm here to end this.'

The doorknob turned, and the door swung open. Charles turned on the lights, and they cast a tall shadow of him down the hall. He walked in. He was clad in a charcoal black suit and immaculate white shirt. His expression showed exhaustion, but it did nothing to overshadow his angular face and prominent cheekbones. Everything was still the same. He still exuded that icy aura that I could feel from a few feet away.

As he walked closer, my heart beat faster, and my breath started coming in short bursts. I could not believe I forgot how handsome he was. He was like a god who did not belong in the mortal world. He had the kind of charm that just made people surrender.

Time had made him into a more mature-looking, head-turning man. I averted my gaze as I felt my cheeks burn.

He walked to the sofa and sat down. I took the seat across from him.

Then, he stared at me with his cold, sharp eyes. My first thought was to lower my head and avoid looking directly at him, but I forced my chin up. I saw my reflection in his dark eyes.

"You're back." He spoke in his usual monotone, which

would have made me bristle had I not known it so completely.

"Yes," I answered, keeping my voice as nonchalant as his.

"My lawyer just sent you an email." As Charles spoke, he loosened his tie. His muscular chest poked through his shirt.

"Okay, let me check." I swallowed and schooled my features into neutrality.

I took out my phone and pulled up my email, and the subject line of the latest email in my inbox jumped right at me—divorce agreement. Although I was expecting it, I still felt like somebody drove a knife through my chest. The pain was swift and startling, and the only reason I was thankful for it was that it blinded me from Charles's charm for a second.

"All right. I'll sign it." I put my phone away and looked back at my soon-to-be ex-husband. Soon, he would no longer belong to me. I had a good run pretending to be Mrs. Moore. But it had to come to an end now, and I had to kick Mr. Moore out of my world.

"Don't you want to read the agreement first?"

"No need. I'm sure Mr. Moore will treat his ex-wife well." I forced a smile. Ex-wife. I was going to be his ex-wife pretty soon, but I was not sure I was okay with such a blunt term.

"You will get this Garden Street house. And the apartment downtown..."

"When?" I interrupted Charles.

"What?" He frowned and looked at me with probing

eyes.

"When are we signing the papers?" I asked softly.

"I'll make an appointment with my lawyer," Charles replied, slightly dipping his chin.

"Very well. I'll wait for your call."

After a moment of silence, he looked up at me again.

"Rita is not in good health. I just want to fulfill her last wish," he explained.

I clenched my fist as I swallowed the lump in my throat. Fulfill her last wish? What a great man. But did he have to do it at my expense? Well, I supposed I had no right to be hurt here. After all, I was just a fake Mrs. Moore. A substitute.

"I understand." I just nodded, even though deep inside, I was brimming with so many things I wanted to say to his face.

"If you need anything else, I'll have my lawyer put it in the agreement."

"No, I'm good. Whatever's in there, it's enough." Once again, I curled my lips into a weak smile.

"Come see Rita tomorrow." Charles

stood up and started pacing in front of me.

He said his last remark firmly. He was not asking me to come see his girlfriend. He was commanding me. What did he think of me? And why should I go meet that woman? Did he just want to rub salt into my wound?

"And why would I do that?" I asked him with a straight face.

"I don't want her to feel guilty about our divorce. Tell her that you're in love with someone else. Assure her that our decision to end our marriage has nothing to do with her." He stopped in front of me and looked into my eyes once again.

"Fine."

I wanted to refuse. But for some reason, I had always found it difficult to say no to him. All he had to do was look me in the eyes and ask, and I'd just give in without a fight.

"Thank you. I'll pick you up tomorrow."

"Don't bother. Just text me the address, and I'll be there."

Charles took one last look at me and then walked away.

I watched his receding figure as tears welled up in my eyes. We had been hiding our marriage during the past three years. No one knew about it except our family and close friends. A few months ago, the media reported news of Charles and Rita's engagement. Photos of Rita trying on wedding dresses were also published and got circulated all over the Internet. What a perfect match!

I spent some long nights staring at those photos, and each and every time, my eyes automatically darted to Charles. At that time, I thought that I should not lose hope in us. I believed that as long as I stayed married to him, there was still a chance that he could fall in love with me and then our relationship would become real. I loved him, and as long as I did, that was

enough.

I did not realize until much later that I also needed him to love me back and not just for a bit. I wanted him to love me as much as I loved him.

I spent the last three years waiting for him. I tried and tried my best to show him my affection and concern despite the distance between us, but I got nothing in return. One day, I woke up and allowed the truth to beat me to a pulp.

That day, the clingy, needy Scarlett died a painful death, and from her corpse rose a new one, a Scarlett clad in an armor so thick, no sword or spear could pierce it.

I went up to my room with my suitcases and unpacked my clothes. Then, I took a shower and changed into a nightgown. The room looked like

nobody had touched it since I left. There was not a knickknack out of place or even a wrinkle on the sheets. It was obvious that Charles had not used it in the last three years because he was probably living someplace else with Rita.

The thought made me wince. I went to the balcony to breathe some fresh air. To my surprise, I saw Charles's car still parked in the driveway. Why was he still here? Should he not be rushing back to his beloved Rita?

While I was blankly staring at his car, my phone rang. It was my best friend, Tiana. I answered her call.

"Hey, Tiana!"

"Bitch! Welcome back!"

"Thank you."

"I'm still on a business trip. I'm so sorry I couldn't pick you up at the airport today."

"It's okay. Work comes first."

"Are you back for good or are you going to leave again the first chance you get?"

"I think I'll be staying for now."

"Great! Come work in our TV station then. I mean, you're perfect for the job. You majored in media, your voice is pleasant to hear, and you're gorgeous. People are going to love you. You'll fit right in. What do you say?"

"Okay."

"Have you talked to Charles?" Tiana's voice suddenly

became low as if she wanted to feel out something.

"Yes." I looked at Charles's car in the driveway again.

"Did he tell you about his little girlfriend?"

"Yes."

"What a shameless jerk! How dare he mention her to you?"

"It's all right, Tiana. He asked me to come see Rita tomorrow, and I said yes."

"What? You agreed to meet that bitch who stole your husband? Are you out of your damn mind, Scarlett? That woman seduced Charles and encouraged him to divorce you. I honestly don't know why she's wasting her energy. The Moore family didn't approve of her for Charles three years ago. What makes her think

they've somehow changed their minds now?" Tiana was practically roaring from the other end of the line.

"All's said and done. At this point, I just want to let bygones be bygones." I smiled lightly.

"Bygones? Scarlett, you still love him, don't you?"

I did not answer. Of course I still loved him. I had never stopped loving him.

"Scarlett!" Tiana's yell snapped me right back to reality.

"I'm tired, Tiana. I'll call you tomorrow, okay? See you soon."

I hung up the phone before Tiana could protest and took a deep breath. Charles's car was still there, and it didn't look like he planned to leave anytime soon.

But what did I care?

All of a sudden, exhaustion finally weighed down on me. I went back to my room and crawled into bed. I laid on my back, stared at the ceiling, and waited for sleep to come. A few moments later, I heard someone knocking on the door.

Rubbing the sleep off my eyes, I slid out of bed and opened the door. I found Charles standing outside.

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