

A Woman Worth Billions, Dated the Wrong Brother

C 31-40

Sharper.

More deliberate. 1

Amelie hesitated.

Oscar shifted in his chair.

“No,” she said quickly. “Nothing was promised.”

Marcus tilted his head slightly.

“Nothing at all?”

Silence stretched.

Her composure began to fracture – not dramatically, but subtly. The tightness around her mouth. The way her fingers curled against her lap.

Then she spoke again.

“He just said...” she faltered, then forced herself to continue, “he said he would finally be ready to marry me.”

The room went completely still.

“Once this was handled,” she added quietly. “Once I made the call.”

Claudia’s expression hardened.

“So your marriage,” she said coolly, “was contingent upon impersonating Miss Asher?”

Amelie’s eyes flickered toward Oscar again.

“He said we couldn’t move forward until everything was settled,” she murmured. “He said Amber was holding what belonged

to him out of spite. That once the properties were under control, there would be no obstacles.” 1

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+15 Bonus

Jasan exhaled slowly beside me.

Not angry.

Disgusted.

Marcus didn’t raise his voice.

“So to be clear,” he summarized calmly, “Mr. White instructed you to impersonate Miss Asher, misrepresent asset ownership, and in exchange indicated he would marry you.”

Amelie swallowed.

“Yes.”

The simplicity of it was almost staggering.

Not strategy.

Not corporate necessity.

Not legal confusion.

Desperation.

Manipulation.

Oscar finally snapped.

“This is being twisted,” he said sharply. “I never forced you.”

“No,” Amelie shot back, something raw breaking through. “You just said you couldn’t marry me while she still controlled everything.”

There it was.

Not business.

Not assets.

Control.

I felt no jealousy.

No bitterness.

Just clarity.

He hadn't wanted the properties because they were necessary.

He wanted them because I had them.

And because as long as they were mine, he had never truly won.

Claudia leaned back in her chair.

"This board has heard enough."

One of the senior members – the governor's friend – spoke again, voice firm.

"Add coercion and conspiracy to the report."

Oscar went pale.

Amelie looked shattered.

And I remained still.

Because in the end, it wasn't betrayal that destroyed them.

It was their own ambition- tied together by insecurity and sealed with fraud.

Jason's hand tightened around mine again.

Steady.

Certain.

Whatever came next, we would face it standing.

P

Support

Share

+15 Bon

+15 Bonus

No hesitation

The knock came fifteen minutes later.

Firm.

Authoritative.

No hesitation.

The doors opened, and the police walked in.

But they weren't alone.

Cameras followed.

Microphones.

Flashing lights.

The media had arrived with them.

Someone had tipped them off.

The boardroom windows overlooked the lobby, and from where I stood, I could see the chaos below. Employees frozen. Security attempting damage control. Reporters speaking urgently into cameras..

Oscar stood slowly.

Amelie's face drained of all remaining color.

The lead officer stepped forward.

“Mr. Oscar White. Mrs. Amelie White. You are being detained on charges of fraud, conspiracy, identity misrepresentation, and falsification of corporate assets.”

The words echoed.

Cold.

Final.

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“This is premature,” he said sharply.

But the handcuffs were already visible.

The cameras captured everything.

Amelie looked at Oscar.

For reassurance.

For leadership.

He offered none.

They were escorted toward the door.

Flashes exploded as soon as they stepped into the hallway.

And then-

+15 Bonus

Another presence entered.

She didn't rush.

She didn't look alarmed.

She walked in as if the room belonged to her

High-end tailoring. Sharp lines. Confidence woven into every step. A platinum pixie cut framing a face that carried both beauty and calculation.

She removed her sunglasses slowly.

"I apologize for the delay," she said smoothly. "Traffic."

Her gaze swept the room, assessing in seconds.

“I’m counsel for the White family,” she continued. “I’ll be handling their case.”

Her tone held no concern.

Only certainty.

“They won’t be spending time in jail,” she added lightly. “I’ll see to that.”

Marcus didn’t move.

Didn’t react.

But I felt Jason go still beside me. 2

Not tense.

Alert.

The woman turned toward the door – then paused.

Slowly.

Deliberately,

She turned back.

Her eyes locked onto Jason.

A slow smile curved her lips.

She lifted two fingers to her mouth and sent an exaggerated air kiss in his direction. 1

“Hello, darling ex-fiancé,” she purred. “Long time no see.”

The room shifted again.

Subtly.

Dangerously.

I didn't look at Jason immediately.

I watched her.

The confidence.

The provocation.

The timing.

She hadn't arrived for Oscar.

She had arrived for leverage.

Jason's expression didn't change.

Not a flicker of nostalgia.

Not surprise.

Just cool recognition.

"Still dramatic, Victoria?" he said evenly.

So she had a name. 1

Victoria smiled wider.

"Still marrying inconvenient women?" she replied sweetly.

The board members were frozen.

Marcus finally spoke.

“You’re representing them?” he asked calmly.

“Of course,” she said lightly. “And I do hate losing.”

Her gaze shifted to me now.

Measured. 2

Curious.

Evaluating

“So,” she said softly, “you must be the wife.”

I met her stare without blinking.

“And you,” I replied calmly, “must be the past.”

The smile on her lips sharpened.

Not offended.

Interested. 1

The officers escorted Oscar and Amelie out.

The cameras followed. 1

Victoria adjusted her sleeve, preparing to leave.

“Oh,” she added casually, glancing over her shoulder, “this won’t end here.”

Then she walked out.

Confident.

+15 Bonu:

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+15 Bonu

Unbuthered

As if the real game had only just begun.

Jason exhaled slowly beside me.

I turned to him at last.

“Ex-fiancé?” I asked mildly.

His jaw flexed once.

“Ancient history,” he replied.

But something told me-

Victoria wasn’t ancient anything.

She was a new storm.

And this time, it wasn’t about properties.

It was personal.

The doors closed behind Victoria.

The cameras followed her out.

The chaos moved downstairs.

But inside the boardroom, the silence returned.

Thicker.

Heavier.

Unavoidable.

Marcus adjusted his cufflinks as if nothing extraordinary had just occurred.

Then he turned slowly toward the board.

“This,” he said calmly, “changes nothing.”

Several members shifted uneasily.

“The arrests,” he continued, “the media, new representation – none of it alters the facts.”

His voice remained steady. Controlled.

“The assets in question are legally registered under Miss Asher. Fraudulent transfers remain invalid. Government contracts remain terminated.”

He placed both hands lightly on the table.

“So let’s proceed to resolution.”

The room stilled again.

“You have two options.”

No theatrics.

+15 Bonus

No raised voice.

Just inevitability.

“Option one,” he said, “you immediately return all properties to Miss Asher’s sole control and compensate her for unauthorized usage, projected profit displacement, and reputational damage.” ”

He named the number again.

It sounded even larger now.

Because the company’s value had already begun to fall.

“And option two?” Claudia asked quietly.

Marcus didn’t hesitate.

“You relinquish control of the company entirely.”

A ripple of shock moved through the room.

Jason remained silent beside me.

Marcus continued.

“You do not have the liquidity to satisfy the damages in cash. Therefore, equity becomes the currency.”

He slid a prepared document forward.

“In exchange for waiving criminal civil pursuit against the corporation itself – separate from Mr. and Mrs. White’s personal liability Miss Asher will assume controlling interest.”

The words were precise.

Surgical.

“You retain minority shares,” Marcus added calmly. “Or you watch the company collapse under investigation and public loss of confidence.”

No one spoke.

Because they all understood.

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It was mathematics.

Without my properties, their valuation dropped.

With government contracts terminated, investor confidence would evaporate.

With criminal investigation underway, stock would hemorrhage.

They could either negotiate survival.

Or preside over ruin. 1

I finally stepped forward.

“I built half of what this company stands on,” I said evenly. “I know its structure. I know its weaknesses.” 1

I let my gaze travel around the table.

“I can stabilize it.”

The truth settled over them like gravity.

“But I won’t do it from the sidelines.”

Claudia exhaled slowly.

“And if we refuse?”

Marcus answered for me.

“Then we allow the market to respond naturally.”

Which meant collapse.

Complete.

The board members looked at one another.

The White name was already being escorted out in handcuffs.

The choice before them was no longer about loyalty.

It was about survival.

Jason's hand brushed mine briefly.

Silent support.

Unconditional.

And for the first time since walking into that building, I felt the shift fully settle.

This was no longer about reclaiming what was stolen.

It was about taking what should have been mine all along.

Share

Support

+15 Bonu

Competition

+15 Bonus

Compensation

As Victoria closed the door behind her, taking most of the cameras with her, the silence that followed was heavy.

Not empty.

Heavy.

Mr. White tried to step toward Jason, but security stopped him immediately. A firm arm across his path. No words needed.

The children were with Jason.

We were not taking any chances.

Jason turned toward his father, Alice still sitting on his lap, her small fingers twisted into his jacket.

“Did you know Oscar tried to take the kids today?”

The sound in the room shifted.

Board members gasped.

Mr. White blinked, caught off guard.

“No, son, I did not know. It is possible he was only trying to assist. To care for them.” 1

Jason let out a low, disbelieving breath.

“Now? When he has never even been around them before?” His eyes hardened. “Don’t make me laugh.”

A beat.

“You knew, didn’t you?”

Silence.

“The Sun family will take action for that as well.”

That name landed like a sealed verdict.

Marcus coughed, clearly uncomfortable.

“Well... now we can continue.”

As if this were procedural. As if children being used as leverage were a scheduling inconvenience.

He adjusted his glasses and addressed the table.

“What will it be? Will you transfer full company control to Mrs. Asher, or will you compensate her for the properties’ usage so far and for damages incurred?” 1

He paused deliberately.

“Please note, this amount does not include the buildings themselves. Only the uncompensated use.” 1

Claudia stood abruptly.

“That figure is outrageous! It’s too large not to include the properties. This is barbaric.”

I laughed. 1

Soft. Controlled.

Componen

+15 Bonus

Na,” I corrected. “Barbaric was purchasing those properties. Maintaining them. Paying for management, repairs, taxes.”

I leaned back slightly.

“Requesting reimbursement for company use.”

I met her gaze.

“And being denied. Repeatedly.”

The two remaining reporters were practically glowing. They could not believe they were still in the room.

Mr. White stood.

“You have no proof you submitted those requests.”

I tilted my head.

“Don’t I, Mr. White?”

He stiffened.

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“You’re forgetting something.”

I folded my hands on the table.

“Every request was sent via official company email. Per compliance protocol.”

A quiet pause.

“Company emails cannot be erased.”

The air changed.

“So yes,” I continued calmly, “I have every single submission/Every attachment. Every follow-up.”

I let my gaze settle on him.

“And so do you.”

Because he had been copied.

On every single one.

Jason turned toward me slowly.

“I have those emails as well.”

The room shifted again.

He reached into his briefcase, placing a printed stack of documents on the table with deliberate calm.

“He forwarded them to me,” Jason continued, eyes on his father. “In an attempt to convince me to pressure her into selling the properties below market value.”

A ripple of murmurs.

Jason turned toward the board.

“You should also be aware,” he said evenly, “that she does not only have my full support.”

A pause.

Сотребном

+15 Bonus

But the full backing of the Sun family as well.”

That name did not echo.”

It settled.

Heavily. 1

Claudia stood abruptly.

“I call for a vote.”

Fast. Too fast.

Before momentum shifted further.

Before alliances recalculated.

But before the first hand could rise-

Mr. White stood.

The scrape of his chair was sharp against the marble floor.

“In exchange,” he said carefully, “for the board withdrawing the criminal charges against my son...”

His gaze flickered toward Oscar’s empty seat. 1

“I will personally cover the full amount of Mrs. Asher’s compensation.”

The silence was absolute.

He wasn’t offering negotiation.

He was offering surrender.

Strategic surrender.

Marcus looked around the table.

“You’ve heard the proposal.”

One by one-

Hands rose.

Not for control transfer.

For payment.

For damage containment.

For survival.

They would pay me.

They would keep the company.

Claudia's fingers tightened around her folder.

"This doesn't solve the long-term issue," she said quickly. "Mrs. Asher, perhaps we should discuss acquisition terms for the properties themselves."

Competitors

I met her gaze calmly.

"The time for that discussion has expired."

Her lips thinned.

"You're refusing to sell?"

“I am.”

Because desperation shifts leverage.

And they were now desperate.

The vote concluded.

Compensation approved. 1

Charges dropped.

Company retained.

But weakened.

And everyone in that room knew it.

Jason leaned back slightly, Alice still asleep against his chest.

This wasn't victory.

It was positioning.

Mr. White had just paid to stop the bleeding.

But wounds like this scar publicly.

And scars change perception.

Support

Share

+15 Bonut

the word

+15 Bonus

She wanted it all

Marcus turned toward Mr. White.

“You have one month,” he said dearly. “To either vacate the properties or formally notify the residents of the change.”

No room for negotiation.

“We will return at that time to receive the keys, documentation, access credentials, and all operational records associated with those assets.”

It wasn’t a suggestion.

It was a deadline.

One of the reporters who had been allowed to remain – a woman with sharp, observant eyes – raised her hand slightly.

“And what about a public announcement?” she asked. “Will the company retract its previous statement against Mrs. Asher?”

Claudia stood before anyone else could answer.

“We see no need to take back or modify that statement.”

There it was. 1

Arrogance.

Marcus gathered the signed documents calmly, sliding them into his portfolio.

That answer would cost them later.

He gave us a small nod.

It was time.

I took Alex's hand.

Jason carried Alice effortlessly against his chest as we walked toward the doors. 1

No rush.

No visible triumph.

Just composure.

Outside, the same reporter hurried after us, now with a camera operator at her side.

"Mr. Sun," she called. "Will the Sun family make public the situation at the school, or should that remain private?"

Jason paused.

Turned.

Smiled politely.

“If you’re asking whether the Sun family will oppose accurate reporting,” he said smoothly, “feel free to publish it.”

The implication was deliberate.

We would not suppress truth.

As we continued toward the car, the reporter called again.

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‘Mr. Sun, what will the Sun family do regarding this situation?’ 14

ason stopped one last time

His smile deepened – not warm

Strategic.

‘Well,’ he said evenly, “we fully support Ms. Asher in the creation of her new company.”

The flash of cameras erupted.

A new company.

Publicly endorsed.

By the Sun family.

Behind us, the building suddenly looked smaller.

My phone rang as we were on our way to the Asher estate.

Pamela.

‘It’s started,” she said without greeting. “A high-profile attorney just went live. She’s implying Amber orchestrated this entire conflict. That she started a war between brothers for amusement.” 1

ason’s jaw tightened slightly.

‘That’s not all,” Pamela continued. “There are already articles about a new company under Amber’s name. Fully endorsed by he Sun estate.”

‘Who’s the attorney?” Jason asked calmly.

There was a pause.

‘It’s Victoria.’

The name settled heavily in the car.

“Victoria,” Pamela clarified. “Your ex-fiancée.”

I thanked her and ended the call.

Silence followed us down the private road.

After a moment, I turned toward Jason.

“What happened?” I asked softly. “With Victoria.”

His expression didn’t shift, but something hardened in his eyes.

“I ended the engagement,” he said.

“I know,” I replied. “But why?”

He didn’t answer immediately.

“She wanted it all,” he said finally.

“All?” I asked.

“The position. The influence. The future chair. The alliances.” His voice was steady. Controlled. “But not the children.”

+15 Bonus

that made my fingers tighten slightly on Alex’s hand in the backseat.

‘She made it clear,” Jason continued. “She saw them as... complications.”

The word was clipped. (1)

‘She expected boarding schools. Distance. Minimal involvement.’

‘And you?’ I asked quietly.

‘They are my children,’ he said, the steel in his voice unmistakable. ‘Adopted or not, they are mine.’

The gates of the estate loomed ahead.

‘She wanted power without responsibility,’ he continued. ‘And then I caught her.’

My heart stilled.

‘With who?’

‘My cousin.’ ¹

The words were flat.

No drama.

No visible pain.

ust fact.

‘In my home,” he added.

inhaled slowly.

‘She called it a mistake. A moment of weakness.”

de gave a faint, humorless smile.

‘I do not forgive disloyalty.”

His eyes met mine briefly.

‘I may marry for strategy if necessary. I understand alliances. I understand power structures.’

His tone lowered.

‘But I will never be made a fool. And I will never support someone who behaves atrociously and expects protection afterward.’

There was no anger in his voice.

Only principle.

“She didn’t want the children,” he continued. “And she betrayed me.”

A pause.

“That was enough.”

The gates opened.

“She is intelligent,” he added calmly. “But she is vindictive when denied.”

“And now?” I asked.

She wanted

“Now she wants to prove she lost nothing.”

But she had.

Power.

Position.

And the Sun name.

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Not the cha

+15 Bonus

Not the children

It did not take long for Victoria to fabricate alie, but the explosion didn't come from the board.

It came from a live broadcast.

Victoria stood behind a polished podium, composed as ever. Cameras flashed. Reporters leaned forward.

“I did not intend to involve myself publicly,” she began, voice steady. “But when the welfare of children is at stake, silence becomes complicity.”

Behind her, a screen illuminated.

Old messages.

Private conversations. 1

My stomach dropped.

Jason stood across the sitting room, watching the broadcast on mute first.

Then he turned the volume up.

Victoria continued.

“These messages,” she said carefully, “were exchanged during my engagement to Mr. Sun. They demonstrate a pattern of strategic thinking regarding the adoption of the children.”

The screen shifted.

Text bubbles appeared.

Jason's name at the top. 1

Highlighted phrases.

- "The optics will stabilize the board.'
-
- 'It secures my position within the estate.'
- 'No one questions a devoted father.'

The implication was clear.

She turned back to the cameras.

“I am formally requesting that the appropriate government agencies review the circumstances under which these children were brought into the Sun estate.” 1

Gasps filled the press room.

“For their sake,” she added solemnly.

The clip ended.

Silence swallowed the Asher estate living room.

Alice was upstairs.

Alex was in the study with a tutor.

Thank God.

Not the chartin

+15 Bonus

Jason did not move.

“Those are fabricated,” said in immediately.

“They’re edited,” he corrected quietly.

That was worse.

He stepped closer to the screen, studying the timestamps.

“They’re pieces,” he said. “Fragments from different discussions.”

“They look convincing,” I said.

“Yes,” he replied calmly. “Because they were built to.”

He turned to me.

“I never used them.”

“I know.”

His expression hardened-not with panic. 1

With calculation.

“She’s escalating beyond defamation,” he said evenly. “She’s inviting government review.”

Which meant headlines.

Investigations.

Public doubt.

“She wants the moral high ground,” I said. “Children’s welfare.”

“And if I respond emotionally,” he continued, “it reinforces her narrative.”

He was right.

Victoria wasn’t attacking his wealth.

She was attacking his character.

His fatherhood.

Jason picked up his phone.

“Marcus,” he said calmly when the line connected. “Preserve all communication archives. Forensic extraction. I want full metadata reports.”

He ended the call.

Then he looked at me.

“I did say adoption would stabilize the estate,” he admitted. “But not for leverage.”

“For protection,” I said.

“For permanence,” he corrected. “They needed it. I needed it.”

There was no shame in his voice. 1

Not the ca

+15 Bonus

Only truth.

“She stitched strategy language around fatherhood,” I said slowly. “To make it look transactional.”

“Yes.”

He inhaled once.

“She believes asking the government to intervene makes her look virtuous.”

“And you look calculated.”

His eyes darkened.

“I may understand power structures,” he said quietly. “But I do not collect children for bargaining.”

The room felt colder.

“She crossed a line,” I said. 1

“No,” he replied.

“She detonated it.”

Upstairs, a faint laugh from Alice drifted down the hallway.

Jason closed his eyes briefly.

“She wants oversight?” he said calmly. “Fine.”

He looked at me again.

“We’ll give them transparency.”

Not defensiveness.

Not outrage.

Transparency.

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Victoria wouldn't just look vindictive.

She would look fraudulent.

And that-

Was a far more dangerous position to occupy.

Jason looked composed.

To anyone else, he would appear steady. Controlled.

But I knew better. 1

His shoulders were rigid beneath his shirt. The veins in his throat stood out every time he swallowed. He kept glancing toward the children's bedrooms while pretending to review documents at the living room table.

He wasn't reading.

He was listening.

Not the char

Forinovement.

For crying.

For anything that might signal distress.

When bedtime approached, he stood without a word.

“I’ll go,” he said quietly.

“I’ll come with you.”

We walked down the hallway together.

Alice was already tucked under her blankets, her stuffed rabbit clutched tightly to her chest.

“Goodnight, Daddy,” she murmured sleepily. 1

Jason kissed her forehead gently.

“Goodnight, princess.”

His voice softened there.

Then we moved to Alex’s room.

Alex was lying stiffly on his back, as if afraid to move too much.

Jason sat on the edge of the bed and pulled the covers up slightly.

“Everything okay?” he asked.

Alex nodded.

Jason leaned down and kissed his forehead.

“Goodnight, son.”

He didn’t stand immediately.

I stayed near the doorway, giving them space.

And then I heard it.

A whisper.

“I’m sorry.”

So quiet I almost thought I imagined it.

“I should have protected you better.”

Alex’s small hand moved slightly, gripping Jason’s sleeve.

“It’s okay, Dad.”

Jason inhaled sharply at that.

Dad.

He stood slowly after a moment, brushing a hand through Alex’s hair one last time before turning off the light.

When we returned to the living area, the house felt heavier.

+15 Bonus

Not the chan

+15 Bonus

I poured him a glass of wine without asking and handed it to him.

He took it but didn't drink right away.

"You do know this isn't your fauk, right?" I said softly.

He stared into the glass.

"She's questioning their security because of me," he replied quietly. "Because of my past choices."

“Your past choice was refusing to marry someone disloyal,” I said evenly. “That’s not a mistake.” 1

“She’s using my words,” he continued. “Turning strategy into cruelty.”

“That doesn’t make it truth.”

He finally looked at me.

“They’re going to investigate,” he said. “There will be visits. Questions.”

“Then they’ll see what we see,” I replied.

“A father who checks on his children five times before midnight.”

His jaw flexed. 2

“I built my life knowing enemies would come after assets,” he said quietly. “I didn’t account for them targeting my children.”

I stepped closer.

“That’s because decent people don’t think like that.”

Silence stretched between us.

He finally took a sip of wine.

“I will not let them feel unstable,” he said. “Not because of her.”

“And they won’t,” I answered firmly. “Because they have you.”

He exhaled slowly.

The tension in his shoulders didn’t disappear-

But it shifted.

From guilt.

To resolve.

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Jason was stressed.

Too stressed.

He didn't say it. He didn't complain. But it was there—under his skin, in the way his fingers curled too tightly around the wine glass, in the stiffness of his shoulders, in the silence he wore like armor..

And I couldn't bear it.

My insides were restless. Loud. Tangled.

I was nervous.

Not about Victoria.

Not about investigations.

About this.

About exposing what I really felt.

I had spent so long protecting my thoughts, guarding my pride, speaking in strategy instead of sincerity. Vulnerability did not come naturally to me.

But watching him carry everything alone-

That was worse. 1

Before I could overthink it, I stood.

He had just taken a sip when I gently pulled the glass from his hand and finished the rest myself. 1

He raised a brow.

“I just needed a little courage,” I admitted.

Then I sat beside him on the small couch.

Close.

Very close.

Practically on top of him.

My hands trembled slightly as I cupped his face.

I intended the kiss to be brief.

Soft.

Reassuring.

Instead, the moment our lips met, something shifted.

Jason's hands slid to my waist, firm and decisive. He deepened the kiss, grounding me, stealing my breath in the most deliberate way. The world outside-the accusations, the fabricated messages, the looming investigations-faded.

For a few minutes, it was just us.

When we finally separated, the air between us felt warmer.

He was shaking.

Subtly.

He rested his forehead against mine.

“Thank you,” he whispered.

I smiled faintly.

“For the kiss?”

+15 Bonus

He exhaled softly.

“No. For this.”

His hand moved to my chest.

“For letting me see what’s here.”

My breath caught.

“I was nervous,” I confessed quietly. “Too nervous to say it out loud. ”

His eyes searched mine.

“I’m not used to exposing what I really think. What I really feel.”

My voice wavered slightly, and I hated that it did.

“I don’t like feeling... unguarded.”

His thumb brushed along my jaw. 1

“And yet you did it anyway,” he said.

“Yes.”

“Thank you for that,” he whispered.

Not dramatic.

Not grand.

Just sincere.

“For standing with me. For not taking this marriage as an opportunity for revenge or positioning. For seeing me.”

“Jason,” I said softly, forcing myself not to retreat into composure, “it was never about revenge. Or political standing.”

I swallowed.

“You made me curious. About what could have been.”

He listened like every word mattered.

“You are a remarkable father. You work from home to be closer to your children. You manage companies under your umbrella and still make time to help me when I need it.”

His grip on my waist tightened slightly.

“And you chose me,” I continued. “When I felt like an afterthought to everyone else.”

Silence wrapped around us. 1

“And you gave me the chance” whispered, “to be myself again.”

He closed his eyes briefly, pressing his forehead more firmly against mine.

“I don’t take that lightly,” he said. “Your honesty. Your courage.”

A faint smile curved his lips.

“You think you needed wine for that?”

I laughed softly. 1.

“I absolutely did.”

He kissed my forehead.

“I would choose you again,” he said quietly. “Every time.”

The tension finally left his shoulders.

Not because the storm had passed.

But because we were no longer facing it alone.

At some point, still wrapped around him, listening to the steady rhythm of his breathing, I drifted.

The exhaustion of the day, the emotion, the relief-it all pulled me under.

I didn't even realize I had fallen asleep.

Jason did.

He shifted carefully, sliding one arm beneath my knees and the other around my back. 1

He carried me to our bedroom with the same quiet precision he used in everything else.

He sat on the edge of the bed and gently removed my shoes, setting them neatly aside.

For a moment, he just looked at me.

Then he brushed a strand of hair away from my face and pressed a soft kiss to my forehead.

"I had never been jealous of my brother," he whispered into the quiet room. "Not once."

His thumb traced lightly along my cheek.

“Never... until I met you.”

And with that confession, barely audible in the dark-

He lay beside me.

Still holding me.

As if afraid to let go.

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Once again, we were awakened by loud knocking at our door.

Not hesitant.

Not polite.

Insistent.

Jason was already sitting up before I fully opened my eyes.

“I’ll get it,” he said quietly.

I pushed myself upright, heart racing, and reached blindly for my phone on the nightstand.

7:02 a.m.

Who knocks like that at seven in the morning?

Jason opened the bedroom door. I heard low voices in the hallway.

His grandmother’s unmistakable tone.

And another voice.

Female.

Controlled.

Official.

I slipped out of bed, pulling a robe around myself.

When I stepped into the hallway, I saw them.

His grandmother stood rigidly near the entrance, dressed impeccably despite the hour.

Beside her was a woman in a beige suit, holding a leather folder against her chest.

Her eyes met mine.

There was something in them.

Regret.

Professional sympathy.

They whispered something to Jason. His expression didn’t change, but his posture did.

Straighter.

Guarded.

He replied calmly, then closed the bedroom door behind him.

“What is it?” I asked.

His gaze met mine.

“The government liaisons are here,” he said evenly. “They want to see the children.”

“At this time?” I snapped before I could stop myself. “Are they insane? They only act quickly when it suits them, it appears.”

Jasau didn’t react to my frustration.

He just watched me.

“They’re adopted,” he said quietly, “They can conduct an unannounced wellness check.”

Of course.

Of course they could.

Victoria had asked for intervention.

And intervention had arrived.

I looked at him more closely then.

He seemed composed.

But I knew him.

His jaw was tight.

His breathing slightly shallow.

This wasn’t fear for himself.

This was fear of being judged as a father.

I stepped forward and wrapped my arms around him without hesitation.

“Hey,” I whispered against his chest.

He exhaled slowly, his arms coming around me instinctively.

“You are a great father,” I said firmly. “Let them see that.”

I pulled back enough to look at him.

“They’ll see clean rooms. Fed children. Homework on desks. A father who works from home to be near them.”

His thumb brushed lightly against my waist.

“They’ll see stability,” I continued. “They’ll see love.”

His eyes softened slightly.

“We’ve done nothing wrong,” I added.

He studied me for a long moment.

Then nodded once.

“You’re right.”

A beat.

“We’ve got this.” 1

He squeezed my hand once before stepping toward the door again.

Outside, I could hear measured footsteps.

Professional.

+15 Bonus

715

space

+15 Bonus

Walling

Let them conic.

They would find no bargaining chips.

No strategic pawns.

Only children who were wanted.

And a father who had chosen them-

Without hesitation.

We dressed quickly.

Not hurried.

Controlled.

If they wanted to assess stability, they would see it.

When we stepped into the living room, the woman in beige extended her hand.

“Mrs. Stevenson,” she introduced herself. “Senior officer in charge of this review.”

Her tone was professional, neither warm nor hostile.

“Due to public pressure,” she continued, “we are required to assess the children’s living conditions and overall welfare.”

Public pressure.

Such a polite term for accusation.

Behind her stood another woman, younger, observant.

“I’m Ms. Patric,” she said. “I’ll be conducting the child interviews.”

Of course she would.

Jason nodded once.

“You’ll find full cooperation,” he said calmly.

We walked down the hallway together.

Their heels were quiet on the marble floors, but the sound echoed anyway.

At the end of the corridor, Ms. Patric was already waiting near the children’s rooms, reviewing something on a tablet.

Alice’s door came first.

I felt Jason shift slightly beside me.

The women made a motion to enter.

Jason stepped forward, blocking the doorway with deliberate calm.

“Now wait a second,” he said evenly.

Both women paused.

“I understand you want to speak with them,” he continued, his voice controlled but firm.
“But allow us to inform them of the

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Mrs. Stevenson’s expression remained neutral 1

“You can stand by the door if you wish,” Jason added. “You may even listen.”

His tone sharpened slightly.

“But this is their private space. They need to feel safe in here.”

There was a beat of silence.

Then Mrs. Stevenson smiled.

“Of course,” she said smoothly. “Go ahead.”

But as she stepped back, she made a note in her log.

Deliberate.

Documented.

Ms. Patric did the same.

I felt the subtle shift immediately.

Boundary.

Authority.

Observation.

They were measuring everything.

Jason knocked gently on Alice's door before entering.

I followed.

Alice was sitting up in bed, her hair tangled from sleep.

"Daddy?" she asked, confused.

Jason sat on the edge of her bed, his voice soft.

"Some visitors are here to make sure you're doing well," he explained. "They may ask you a few questions."

"Am I in trouble?" she asked immediately.

"No," he said firmly. "You are never in trouble for being honest."

I stood beside him, smoothing her hair.

"They just want to make sure you're happy and safe."

She nodded slowly.

Jason kissed her forehead and stood.

When we stepped back into the hallway, both women were watching us carefully.

"Ready?" Ms. Patric asked.

Jason stepped aside.

+15 Bonus

But he did not move far.

He remained within sight

Within earshot.

Not interfering.

Just present.

Mrs. Stevenson's pen hovered above her notebook. 1

Observing.

Assessing.

Testing.

This wasn't just about the children.

It was about control.

And I had the distinct feeling-

Victoria would be waiting for the report.

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