

143 I am married.

When Arwen spoke, Catrin looked up at her. "Is this your reason, Arwen?" she asked, sounding almost incredulous. "How could you be so foolish? This is just an image. What could it prove? Don't tell me that you broke up with him just because you received this picture. I would be very disappointed in you." Her tone was already laced with disapproval. 1

She then turned to look at her husband and said, "Idris, there is no need to get so worked up over a photo. Don't we know how easy it has become to create such fake pictures these days? We have watched Ryan grow up –there is no way he would do something like this."

"Aren't you a bit too confident, Mom?" Arwen asked, shaking her head in disbelief. "Though, I can't say I am surprised. I guess I expected this from the start." There was a hint of mockery in her tone that she didn't even try to mask.

"Arwen, stop acting foolish now. You know this as well as I do that Ryan isn't the kind of man who would cheat on you with another," Catrin snapped.

"Really, Mom? Then tell me, what exactly is cheating if not this?" Arwen asked, watching her mother closely. "Please. Please help me

understand it better so that I don't act *foolish* again."

"Arwen, I don't want to argue with you on this. I just know that Ryan is not that kind of boy. He wouldn't betray you like that. For God's sake, you grew up together. You should have shown some trust in him."

Arwen shook her head slowly. "Mom, it seems you don't have an answer to my question. Fine. Not a problem. Let me explain what cheating actually is. Maybe ...just maybe then you will reconsider this unwavering confidence."

"Arwen, you —"

"Cheating isn't just about having an affair, Mom. It's also about having someone else in your heart while promising yourself to another. It's when your loyalty to someone else runs deeper than your commitment to the one you are with. Cheating is also when your partner doesn't think twice before abandoning you to save the one he truly cares about. It's choosing someone else's happiness over mine, every single time. And that, Mom, is exactly what Ryan did. Not once, but always."

Arwen took a steady breath, her eyes hardening with determination as she reached for a folder she had brought with her in her bag. Her fingers trembled slightly, hesitant to expose her

vulnerability to her parents anymore. She feared her mother would dismiss it as unimportant, just as she had dismissed everything else. But then at the same time, she wanted to take this chance – to see if her mother would finally understand

"Since words alone don't seem to be enough, maybe this will make things clearer," she said before extending out the folder.

Catrin's brows furrowed as she glanced down at her hands. Idris looked at his daughter, a flicker of unease crossing his face. "What is this, Arwen?" he asked softly.

Since her mother didn't even care to take the folder from her, she handed it to her father. "This is another evidence of Ryan's cheating, Dad," she said before explaining. "My medical reports from the accident that I met a month ago." She then turned to press her gaze at her mother, adding, "The accident in which Ryan left me to die while putting all his efforts to save Delyth, who had merely sprained her ankle."

Idris took the folder and skimmed through the reports. His expression turned darker flipping every other page. His eyes widened as he took in the details –the fractures, the stitches, the long hours she had spent alone in the emergency room.

"When did this happen? And why haven't you

informed us?" Idris asked, feeling exasperated just by guessing how much Arwen must have suffered. 1

"I was unconscious when I was brought to the hospital. I only regained my consciousness several days after the surgery. By that time, I had already started to recover. I didn't want you to worry for me." Though she desperately wanted her parents to worry for her, she still tried to be sensible just as her mother wanted her to be all the time. She wanted to make her mother happy. But she only realized now that no matter what she did, her mother would appreciate her. She wouldn't be content with her. 3

Idris looked up at Arwen and said as if she could feel her pain. "We are your parents, darling. We will always worry for you. Always." He then turned to look at Catrin and said, "This was severe, Catrin. I think we should find some good specialists to check on her. Our daughter has suffered a lot. She —"

"Suffered?" Catrin interrupted, cutting him off without any care. "Isn't she standing all fine now? Idris, look at her. She isn't dead, nor did she turn a cripple. How has suffered? These are just her lame excuses to rebel against me. And definitely, I am not taking any of it," she said, all while keeping her gaze fixed on Arwen. 3

"Catrin!" Idris's voice raised. But again, it lacked the authority he had never been able to muster in front of his wife. And maybe he never would because he was heavily indebted to her, all over the years. 3

Arwen's heart felt heavy. In the end, the fear she had turned real. Her mother dismissed all of it as if it didn't even hold a hint of importance. "Mom, I really want to ask you something today. What did I do wrong to deserve your such hatred? Do you not love me even a bit?" She hasn't felt this vulnerable and desperate before. She wanted to know what she did was wrong. Why was her mother like this to her? For others, their mothers would stir a war against the world for them. But for her, it was something she could just dream.

"You are no longer a kid, don't ask me such stupid things, Arwen. That won't make me change my decision." Catrin said, her tone sharp and unwavering. "I will forget it all and do everything to make amends so that your relationship with Ryan gets back to what it was. I will talk to Beca. I am sure she won't mind your foolishness. Just pull yourself together. Tomorrow, we will visit them and fix another date for your wedding. This time —" 2

"Mom, I said I am not marrying him." Arwen interrupted, her voice steady but filled with

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frustration. Her gaze hardened, and she felt her chest tighten with the weight of her words.

"Arwen!"

"I am already married, Mom." 3

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