

CEO's Unwanted Wife

Chapter 5

The hospital room door clicked shut behind Alex as he stepped inside, the sterile scent of antiseptic hitting him instantly. Victoria Langford sat in her wheelchair by the bed, her frail frame draped in a silk robe, looking both delicate and determined.

"Can you explain what's going on, doctor?" Alex inquired of the attending physician, a man in his mid-forties.

Adjusting his glasses on the bridge of his nose, the doctor glanced at Vicky for a moment before responding, "I'm sorry to say the treatment hasn't been successful. We're going to conduct further tests to pinpoint the issue."

Vicky pressed her lips into a thin line, her hands trembling at the news. Once the doctor left after a few more words, she reached out, arms trembling slightly, seeking an embrace, her eyes shimmering with raw desperation.

"I don't know why it happened. Why did it have to be me? It's just so unfair," Vicky whispered, her voice fragile yet pleading. "Alex, can you hold me for a moment?"

Alex froze, his body tensing as he took an instinctive step back. "Vicky, I'm here for you, I'll always take care of you" he said, his tone steady but laced with guilt.

"Do you even like me anymore?" she asked, her voice breaking. Each word cracked and fragile, trembling like glass on the edge of shattering. "Is it because I'm broken?"

Alex's jaw tightened. His gaze didn't shift. "You're not broken," he said, voice low. "You're still you, Vicky. I've never seen you as anything else."

"Then why do you flinch like I'm made of glass?" Her voice rose—desperate now, aching. "Why is there this distance between us? Why can't you just... hold me like before?"

I care about you," Alex said, pulling his hand back gently but decisively. "But I am also bound to my grandfather's promise."

"Rest now." he said finally, his voice softer but resolute. His silence was heavy as he turned toward the door. "I'll check on you tomorrow,"

As the door closed behind him, Vicky sat alone in the quiet room, her facade of fragility crumbling. She clutched the sleeve of her robe where it had brushed against him, lifting it to her nose. A faint, unfamiliar scent—floral and soft—hit her, and her features twisted with fierce jealousy.

"Her," Vicky hissed under her breath, her voice venomous. "Emma. You dare to come between us?"

Her hands clenched into fists, the rage burning in her chest as she stared at the empty doorway. "I'll destroy you," she whispered, her promise echoing in the sterile silence. "Alex is mine. No one else's."

Late that night, the dim light of Alex's penthouse cast long shadows across the vast bedroom. He stepped in silently, his suit jacket discarded, shirt sleeves rolled up as he approached the bed where Emma lay sleeping. His gaze softened, a rare tenderness breaking through as he reached out, brushing his fingers lightly against her forehead to check for fever.

"I can't do this to you," he whispered, the words barely audible in the quiet. He stepped out, pausing only to type a message before vanishing down the hall.

The next morning, Emma stirred awake in the unfamiliar expanse of Alex's penthouse bedroom, the silk sheets cool against her skin. She sat on the edge of the bed, rubbing her temples as fragmented memories of the night before swirled—his hands, his care, then his sudden absence. Her heart felt heavy, uncertainty gnawing at her, though she felt much better after a night of rest and medication.

Her phone buzzed on the nightstand, snapping her out of her thoughts. She picked it up, seeing Lily Matthews' name flash across the screen, her college roommate and closest friend. "Hey, Emma!" Lily's cheerful voice came through. "Dinner tonight? I miss you, and I've got so much to tell you!"

"Hey, Lily," Emma replied, a small smile tugging at her lips despite everything. "Yeah, I'd love that. I could use a friend right now."

"Perfect! Meet me at that cozy place on 5th Street at seven," Lily said, her tone bright. "Can't wait to see you!"

"See you there," Emma agreed, a flicker of relief warming her as she hung up. "At least something feels normal," she muttered, pushing herself off the bed to get ready.

By evening, Emma stepped into the cozy restaurant on 5th Street, dressed in a simple navy blouse and soft jeans. The scent of grilled meat and rosemary bread filled the air. Dim lighting, soft laughter, clinking glasses—it was the kind of place that dulled the outside world.

Lily waved from a corner table, practically bouncing in her seat. Her strawberry-blonde curls were as wild as ever, her smile wide.

"I missed you," Lily said, pulling Emma into a tight hug. "And you look like you've been through ten breakups and one apocalypse. Spill everything."

Emma let out a dry laugh. "I'll tell you. Just... maybe after we eat."

"Fair," Lily said, already flipping the menu. "I'm starving. Also—big news. You're meeting Simon tonight."

Emma blinked. "Simon?"

"My boyfriend," Lily said, grinning. "He'll be joining us in a bit. He's parking the car."

Emma paused. "Didn't know you were seeing someone."

"I didn't either. Met him last month through a client party. Works in real estate. Grew up here, left for Boston after college, just moved back. Kind of intense but sweet. You'll like him. I think he's the one."

Emma smiled politely, but something in her chest tightened. She wasn't ready for more "intense" people in her life. Not after the weeks she'd had.

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Ten minutes later, a tall man in his early thirties walked in. Expensive blazer, designer watch, perfectly styled hair. His confidence preceded him.

"Ladies," he greeted smoothly, sliding into the seat beside Lily and offering his hand across the table. "You must be Emma. Lily talks about you constantly."

Emma shook his hand briefly. "Nice to meet you."

Simon's handshake was just slightly too long. His eyes lingered slightly too much. She gently pulled her hand back, feigning a smile.

Simon turned to Lily, kissed her temple, and began recounting his frustrating parking experience, but Emma had tuned out. She tried to shake off the odd vibe. Maybe he was just one of those overly charming types.

Still, her instincts prickled.

Halfway through dinner, Simon excused himself to take a call.

"You look like you've been through it," Lily said after Simon left, her tone teasing but concerned as she studied Emma's face. "Everything okay?"

"I'll survive," Emma replied with a weak smile, not ready to dive into the mess of her life. "What about you? What's new?"

"Oh, tons," Lily started, her eyes lighting up. "But first, let's order. I'm starving!"

A few minutes later, Lily's phone rang, and she excused herself to take the call outside. "I'll be right back," she said, leaving Emma alone at the table.

Noticing that Lily was occupied and would take some time, Emma got up from the table and wandered toward the restaurant's terrace to take in the view.

Feeling it would be rude to be absent when the food was served, Emma was about to step away from the terrace when a voice near the fire exit caught her attention. It was far too familiar to dismiss.

"That woman? She's just a piece on my board, nothing more. I'm only keeping her close for amusement. The one I'm really after is her friend. Trust me, you'd understand if you saw her. I can't stop thinking about being with her," Simon, said to someone on the phone, while Emma stifled a gasp at his cruel words.

Having heard enough and anxious to avoid detection, Emma began to creep away, but her foot accidentally bumped a plastic flowerpot, tipping it over with a clatter that caught Simon's attention.

Simon stepped out a moment later, phone still in hand.

He spotted her instantly. His smile came slowly and deliberately. "Emma," he said, voice smooth as glass. "Didn't see you there."

Simon leaned in closer as she walked back to her table, his voice dropping to a predatory whisper. "You know, Emma, I've been wanting to get to know you better. A lot better."

"Stay away from me," Emma hissed, her stomach churning with disgust as she pushed her chair back. "I'm not interested."

"Oh, come on," Simon pressed, his grin widening. "Don't play hard to get. I can show you a good time."

Despite her rejection, Simon boldly reached out, resting his hand over Emma's with a suggestive smirk.

"I said no," Emma spat, her hand trembling with anger as she grabbed the water and flung it at him, the liquid splashing across his shirt. "Leave me alone!"