

The Failed Takeover

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Chapter 1

"Babe, why aren't you sleeping yet? It's that time of the month for you, so you really shouldn't be staying up this late!"

Harlan brought over a glass of warm milk, which he brewed and placed in my hands. Then, he brought a blanket and gently draped it around me, asking tenderly, "Is your back sore? Would you like me to massage you?"

I closed the file in my hand and smiled brightly at him. "Yasmine's school recital is coming up soon. She's been unhappy with the piece she's been practicing. I got the most renowned pianist in the country to come and coach her in a couple of days."

Harlan looked touched. "You're always so dedicated to Yasmine. When she becomes successful, she'll surely repay you a hundredfold!"

I looked at Harlan and replied naturally, "Of course. Yasmine is smart and talented. Being her mother is my greatest blessing."

Harlan sighed gently and embraced me from behind. "The Thornes are incredibly blessed that I married such a wonderful wife like you!"

Turning my face so he couldn't see, I sneered silently without responding.

Harlan and I had been together since college, which equaled four years of dating and seven years of marriage. Despite eleven years of being together day in and day out, he was almost perfect in my eyes.

During our relationship, he never forgot when my time of the month was and prepared a glass of warm milk for me for over a decade without fail. After marriage, he knew I loved surprises and romance, and no matter how late he came home, he always brought a small, thoughtful gift.

Until I overheard his conversation with the nanny, I had always thought I was the happiest woman in the world.

"Wow, Lana, you're amazing!"

From the music room not far away, Yasmine's delighted applause rang out.

Instinctively, I got up and walked toward the door of the music room. The graceful melody of the piano ceased. Lana picked my daughter up and affectionately tickled her under the arms. "So, do you want to continue practicing?"

"Heehee, Lana, give me a kiss, and I'll keep practicing!" Yasmine pouted and acted coy.

Lana gave her a big kiss on the cheek. "Alright, play it for me one more time. If you play well, I'll make you egg and soldiers tomorrow morning!"

Their intimate tone resembled that of a biological mother and daughter.

From the corner of her eye, Lana noticed me and immediately got up. Flustered, she put Yasmine down. "Dana, I..."

Before she could explain, Harlan quickly interjected to smooth things over, "You haven't been feeling well these days, so I asked her to help Yasmine practice the piano. She used to be a music teacher, and you can see she's done a decent job with Yasmine."

Upon hearing this, Lana gave me a bashful smile and then quickly lowered her head. "Well, I was a substitute teacher for a few years. Your family has been so good to me. I just wanted to help Yasmine as much as I could."

Seeing her guilty demeanor, I couldn't help but think back to the day I gave birth. After narrowly escaping death, I woke up to find her holding the child I had risked my life to deliver, soothing her skillfully.

Harlan had explained she was a nanny hired from a top agency.

Lana had taken care of my child with such care that even when my mother wanted to hold the baby, she was reluctant to let go.

Back then, a nurse had joked, "This nanny seems to love the child even more than the mother does!"

At that time, Lana wore the same expression: a lowered head to hide her guilty conscience.

Seeing I hadn't spoken for a while, Lana nervously twisted her hands. "Dana, I know I'm just a nanny, and I shouldn't have gone into the music room. But Yasmine was upset today, so I went in to cheer her up. I..."

I raised my hand to interrupt her, smiling. "What are you saying? You've been helping me take care of Yasmine since my postpartum days. I'm grateful to you. Why would I blame you?"

Hearing this, Lana and Harlan exchanged a quick glance, visibly relieved.

Yasmine seemed to sense the lightened atmosphere and ran toward me with her head tilted upward. "Mommy, can you come to my rehearsal at school tomorrow?"

I bent down and pinched her chubby cheeks. "Do you want Mommy to?"

The little girl smiled sweetly. "I want you to go and earn money for us to spend. Lana and Daddy can watch my rehearsal instead!"

Lana's expression changed, and she hastily took Yasmine from my arms while explaining anxiously, "Dana, don't be upset. Yasmine is just worried about interrupting your work. She always says she'll repay you when she grows up!"

Harlan caught Lana's look and quickly chimed in, "That's right. Yasmine has been more mature than other kids since she was little. You're her mom. You understand her best!"

I pretended not to notice their unspoken exchange and gently patted Yasmine's head. "Alright, I shall listen to you."

Yasmine tilted her little head and wrapped her arms around Lana's shoulders, swaying. "See, I told you, Mommy will agree! Lana, let's keep practicing the piano. Daddy, come listen too. Don't bother Mommy anymore!"

Harlan casually moved closer to Lana and sat beside her whereas Yasmine focused on practicing the piano, leaving no one to spare me a glance.

I smiled indifferently, turned, and went back to the study to continue working.