

Chapter 20

The soft, coquettish voice made Rebecca's hand tremble, nearly dropping the phone.

"Vance, are you home yet? Is everything alright?" Catherine slurred, sounding just as drunk.

Without waiting for a response, she continued, "I understand your dilemma. Rebecca has given you so much. You don't have to feel guilty toward me. W-We're fine the way we are. I don't care whether you're with her or not. I just want you to remember me. That would be enough. Let's just keep it this way. She lives in your house, and I live in your heart. I'm content with that."

The phone finally slipped from Rebecca's hand and fell to the ground. Catherine's words kept echoing in her mind.

She stumbled out of the room, went into the guest room, and collapsed onto the bed, trying to force that voice out of her head.

She stirred at Vance's voice. He was talking to Nancy.

"Where did these flowers come from?"

"Mrs. Bradford brought them back last night."

"She went out?"

"Yes."

"By herself? Where did she go?" Vance's voice rose noticeably.

"She said to watch a performance with her teacher."

"Teacher? Who gave her the flowers?" Vance pressed, skeptical.

"I'm not sure."

"What kind of performance? Where? What time?"

Nancy faltered. "Sir, I don't know."

The guest room door opened, and Rebecca quickly shut her eyes, pretending to be asleep. 1

Vance started, "I know you're awake. Your hand just moved."

Rebecca sighed, opening her eyes, and he asked, "Who did you go to the performance with last night?"

She didn't get why he was so hung up on that matter, but she replied anyway, "Mrs. Lemke." 1

"Rebecca," he hesitated, "it's good that you're reconnecting with her, but don't share too many personal matters. You know, her husband and I..."

She got his meaning. He didn't want her to reveal that Catherine wasn't his wife, and that explained why he kept pushing about who she had gone to the performance with. 1

She rolled over in bed, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. He sat down beside her. "Do it for me, okay?"

He reached out, trying to turn her toward him, but his action evoked her memories of him pinning her down on the bed, murmuring Catherine's name, and telling her to obey him last night.



A wave of nausea hit her. She slapped his hand away, pulled the covers up, and buried herself beneath them. 1

"Give me some time. I'll explain it to them myself, okay?" He leaned down, tugging at the blanket to uncover her face. 1

Getting no response, gave up and switched topics. "By the way, what was your passion and greatest love in that post?"

"Definitely not you," she replied. 2

His face stiffened, but he quickly adopted an understanding expression. "Alright, stop fussing. I know you're still sulking and jealous. I saw your post last night and came back, didn't I?" 1

So, he assumed she was talking about him in that post, and now he had mistaken her denial for frustration.

She poked her head out from under the covers. "I said it." 1

His expression softened, and he stroked her hair. "That's better. I'll be back tonight, but you don't have to wait for me. If you're tired, just sleep."

With that, he got up and left the room. The scene was all too familiar.