



Chapter 21

Before Catherine appeared, Vance had always been like this—speaking softly to Rebecca, urging her to rest early, and gently stroking her hair.

They had never argued in their marriage. But what did a fight-free marriage even signify?

Rebecca no longer wanted to dwell on the myriad details between her and Vance. Every recollection only tightened a band around her head like a curse. Better to use that energy for studying.

She got up immediately, washed up, and moved her computer and phone to the guest room to research study-abroad agencies and related posts.

And so, the algorithm proved its prowess once again. She had watched a show last night, and today, her feed was flooded with relevant notes. 1

From these, she learned the male lead's name was Desmond Schroeder. There had indeed been someone like that in her department back then.

Then, she scrolled to a note from Desmond himself.

At first glance, the scene in the photo looked familiar. It was the moment he presented flowers to her.

Her heart skipped a beat. Afraid the shot had captured her, she quickly clicked open the post. Thankfully, there was only this one photo, angled to show Desmond's face fully without including her at

all.

But the text in the note shocked her anew. [She came to my performance.] 1

[I thought that she had disappeared into the crowd and that I would never see her again, but there she was, sitting in the audience watching me dance. A belated thank you. If not for you, perhaps there wouldn't be me on stage today.] 2

Rebecca was baffled. It seemed like it was about her, yet not quite.

What had she done to earn such lasting gratitude? Those words carried immense weight. Had she done something that significant?

She had no memory of it. Amid her doubts, Lauren's call came in, inviting her to a banquet that evening.

"It's a private gathering hosted by Pascal and me, with a few close friends. I'm heading back to Arelmoor tomorrow, so I thought we could meet up tonight," Lauren said.

"Sure, I'll be there on time," Rebecca replied, tempted to ask more about Desmond.

On a second thought, she stopped herself. There was no need.

Lauren had invited other friends, but Rebecca never expected that Vance and Catherine would be among them.

When she arrived at the banquet, the two were already there, chatting with others.

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Vance's potential collaboration with Pascal was apparently common knowledge; everyone treated him with respect, their words laced with polished flattery. 1

"Wow! Mr. Bradford and Mrs. Bradford were college classmates? From school uniforms to wedding gowns... Isn't that straight out of a romance novel? So enviable!" one guest remarked.

Catherine looked at Vance affectionately. "It's nothing, actually. There have been many ups and downs. I was a bit willful, but Vance has always been so tolerant. No matter how long I was away or how far I went, he waited for me right where I left."

Vance smiled indulgently, the picture of gentlemanly grace.

"Oh my gosh, what fairy-tale love!" gushed a younger, single guest.

Vance chuckled, "When it comes to marital bliss, we should all learn from Mr. and Mrs. Lemke. They're the true epitome of devoted partnership, weathering storms hand in hand." 1

Everyone nodded in agreement.

But then, a discordant voice cut in, "As far as I remember, Mrs. Bradford used to be a dancer, but after a car accident, her leg was permanently injured, forcing her to leave the stage. Yet now, her legs seem perfectly fine."

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