



Chapter 26

"Yes," Rebecca replied, unwilling to explain further.

Vance took a step forward. The distance between them was so close now that she could see the deep lines around his eyes.

At barely 30, he already bore the marks of time.

"Rebecca," he muttered, gripping her shoulder. The faint scent of his cologne lingered in the air. "Have I ever treated you badly these years?"

Exhaustion leaked from the deep furrows in his brow and the dark circles under his eyes.

She sighed, "No." 1

She admitted that he had tried, in his own way, to take care of her—food, clothes, shelter, money. He'd been generous to her grandma and family, showering them with wealth.

But even all that wasn't enough. It would have been better if he had just given her a large sum of money instead of marrying her.

"If I haven't wronged you, how could you treat me like this?" he croaked, the rims of his eyes reddening. "How could you join forces with others to hurt me? Isn't what's mine yours? Isn't my business your business? Isn't my money also yours? Aren't we one?" 2

Now he remembered they were one. But he had always been on the side of his friends and Catherine, treating her like an outsider.



"Vance," she said, taking a deep breath, "now you suddenly remember we're married?"

He faltered, deeper weariness flooding his face. "Are you still upset about Catherine? She was trying to help, knowing Mr. Lemke values stable families and strong marriages. That's why she didn't clarify at the afternoon tea. But what difference does it make? Am I not your husband? The marriage certificate says it all. I'm your legal husband."

"Actually, it wasn't necessary," Rebecca responded, her tone cool.

"Not necessary?" He furrowed his brow, confused.

"No need for her to help you. No need for pretense. All we need is..."

"Shut up!" he yelled, already sensing where the conversation was going. "Do you think after a divorce, he'll marry you? Don't be naïve."

He let go of her shoulder and stormed off.

The wind blew over, carrying the scent of his cologne. It was the same fragrance Catherine had worn that evening.

Rebecca disliked it, feeling suffocated, and hurried inside. There, her flowers from last night lay shattered with the vase.

They had fallen victim to Vance's anger, and Nancy was absent.

Vance was a workaholic, something Rebecca had always acknowledged. Otherwise, he wouldn't have built such a successful business at such a young age.

He cared about partnering with Pascal, but the deal was blown off.



He had every reason to be frustrated, but it had nothing to do with her. She wasn't the one who had passed off as his wife.

She bent down to pick up the broken vase when the door opened, and Nancy's voice rang out. "Madam, leave it to me."

Nancy hurried over, afraid Rebecca might hurt herself with the glass. "I went to fetch the clothes."

Some of their clothes had been in the professional laundry for care, and she had gone to retrieve them. "I saw Mr. Bradford just now." 1

Rebecca hummed, having just watched him leave.

Nancy added, "He sat alone by the lake. Unsure what he was doing."

It was not hard to figure out. The deal was lost, and he needed some time to calm down.

"It's fine. Don't worry about him," Rebecca replied.

Before, she would have fretted immensely.

She had spent five years accompanying Vance as he built his business. During that time, she had been constantly worried about whether he was tired, being treated unfairly, losing money, facing setbacks, or upset about his losses.