

Five Years of Marriage to Mr. Bradford

Novel - Chapter 4

Chapter 4

Catherine, reading the room, interjected timely, "Don't mind their harsh words, but as your long-time friends, we're truly concerned about you. We're blunt, but it's nothing personal. Don't take it to heart." "I'm not upset," Vance replied, pocketing his phone. "Doesn't matter. She won't stray far. Let's go on." In five years, home was her only refuge. He was not worried because she had nowhere else to go. Aiden eyed Catherine, muttering, "Catherine is the bigger person here. If you two hadn't split..." "Don't talk nonsense." Catherine glared. "Keep your mouth shut for one night."

Vance is married now. That's inappropriate." Her gaze turned wistful toward Vance. "I don't want much. Just want to be accepted by you guys and stay by your side. That's enough." "Silly talk." Aiden thumped his chest loyally. "You're forever our princess, and we will never let anyone bully you. Vance, right?" Vance swirled his wine, the scene evocative of old times. He'd sit back, watching his crew banter with Catherine, not intervening unless things got out of hand. Now queried, he smiled faintly. "Of course." ... Rebecca didn't go home. Instead, she settled into her booked hotel.

All the pent-up grievances and pain were unleashed the moment she closed the door behind her. Aiden's limp-mocking replayed endlessly in her mind, and their laughter haunted her like a curse. She had known all along their whispers behind her back, but she had never told Vance. She understood his work's toll, so she avoided conflicts, unwilling to add to his burdens or strain his bonds with his friends. Now, she saw her folly. He'd never clash with them over her; their friendship trumped everything. To him, she was nothing more than a debt-a burden that dragged him down.

Without her, his life would be so much easier. "She is a cripple. Who else would want her?" "Yet she still expects so much from Vance?" "I'd rather be the crippled one than wed one and face ridicule." "Other CEOs flaunt elegant partners; Vance? He doesn't even have someone he can take out in public." ... The gossip and ridicule that Rebecca had heard over the past five years came rushing back like a tidal wave. She felt like she was being dragged under, drowning in it all. She couldn't breathe, the pain so intense it felt as if her chest and lungs were being torn apart.

Trembling, she accessed a locked album on her phone-something untouched for five years. It contained photos and videos from her school days, documenting her dance practices and shows. Post-injury, she sealed these relics, set a password, and forced herself not to open it. Now her shaky finger tapped on a random video. The music played; she spun, flipped, and performed a mid-air split. She was vibrant, agile, and applauded thunderously. Was saving Vance wrong? But even then, marriage wasn't her aim.

He insisted, orchestrating a grand proposal and kneeling before her with a huge diamond ring that sparked hope. She turned off her phone and collapsed in sobs. It was the first unbridled cry in five years. She wept until her tears ran out, but pain remained burning in her chest, licking at her from the inside like fire. But it was that very pain that brought her a moment of clarity in the suffocating whirlpool of emotions. The more it hurt, the more lucid she became. She rushed to the bathroom, splashing cold water on her face to calm down.

The mirror reflected her dulled self, and she bit her lip. "Rebecca, one good cry is enough. No more. Now, eat well, rest well, and tomorrow, focus on your exam." The one thing she could be thankful for was that, during those long five years, she had spent her time studying to kill the boredom. Not because she had grand ambitions. She just had so much time and had nothing to do. Waiting for Vance to come home had been her whole life, but he always came home late. At first, she thought it was because of work. Later, she realized that he just didn't want to face her too soon.

She had overheard it herself. Back then, she understood how hard he worked. She even gathered the courage to show concern for him, making him special meals and delivering them to his office, only to overhear the hard truth. He was talking with a friend who asked why he hadn't gone home yet. There was hardly anyone left in the office, and yet he, the CEO, was still working overtime. Vance had replied, "I don't know how to face my wife's enthusiasm." Simple-minded back then, Rebecca didn't understand the implication, but that friend did. He gasped, "No way!

Don't tell me you haven't slept together yet." Vance fell silent because that was the truth. He never touched her, even though she had hinted or taken the initiative. Every time, he found excuses like her condition or his tiredness to reject her. She wasn't stupid. Gradually, she realized he simply didn't love her, and that was why he didn't want to touch her. But hearing it from his mouth hurt her deeply, the pain almost suffocating. His friend, half-jokingly, half-seriously, asked him, "You don't mean to tell me you have no physical reaction at all, do you?

Anyway, she's pretty." Vance's reply was the needle that pierced deep into her heart, and for the following years, it continually wounded her. Every time she thought about it, the pain would gnaw at her. "I've tried," Vance replied. "I wanted to have a normal married life with her, but every time I look at her leg, I lose all interest." So, that was how it was. Her leg, the one scarred and atrophied from saving him, in his eyes was disgusting, revolting. It was something that turned him off and killed his desire. She never knocked on the office door that day.

The meal she had prepared with such care was thrown into the trash can. From then on, she never set foot in his company again.

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