

Five Years of Marriage to Mr. Bradford

Novel - Chapter 6

Chapter 6

"Vance..." Rebecca choked back her tears, her voice trembling despite her efforts to stay composed. "What's wrong?" Vance reached for her hand. "If you feel like crying, then cry. Don't hold back." His voice was truly so soft and gentle. It brought her back to the day years ago when she had come out of the operating room after the surgery. He and the nurse had wheeled her back to the ward, and he had stayed by her bedside, speaking to her in that same tender tone, as if his words could drip with compassion. "Does it hurt? Cry it out.

Don't hold back." At that time, she had believed that such gentle care was the best medicine to ease her pain. Then it took her years to fully understand that a man's tenderness and concern could never truly evolve into love. "Vance, let's get a divorce," she said in a low voice, withdrawing her hand as the stinging pain gradually blurred her eyes with tears. He furrowed his brow, clearly not expecting her to say something like that.

After a brief silence, he called over the waiter to bring a clean small dish, then picked up a piece of fish with his fork and carefully began removing the bones. At the same time, he spoke in a soft, soothing voice. "I know you're still angry, but mentioning divorce isn't a rational response. If we divorced, what would you do? How would you manage to live on your own?" Rebecca's breathing became rapid and uneven. For five years, in the eyes of everyone around her, she had been seen as nothing more than his appendage.

If separated from him, she would become a pitiful, unwanted soul incapable of surviving independently. And now, it was clear that he thought the same way. "I can do it," she replied firmly. For the first time, she stood her ground with determination, eager to prove her strength and fight for her dignity. Yet he merely smiled, as if dismissing her words as nothing more than a momentary fit of pique. He placed the carefully deboned fish in front of her and said, "Eat up.

I'll permit you to stay upset for a little while longer, but once the meal is over, you can't be angry anymore." "I'm not angry. I want a divorce," she insisted, unsure how to make him see that her request wasn't just an impulsive outburst born from frustration. "You see," he set down his fork, "today, I pushed back two meetings and a business discussion specifically to spend time with you and make you happy. Tomorrow and the day after, I might not have nearly as much availability. Let me repeat this. Catherine is a good friend to all of us. She's part of our crew.

I treat her the same as I do Aiden and the others. She really likes you and has always wanted to become friends with you. With this attitude of yours, how am I supposed to introduce her to you properly?" "Then there's no need to introduce her at all," Rebecca

replied, not believing for a second that Catherine truly wanted to be friends with her. Vance's voice sharpened. "Rebecca!" She had known that, whenever the topic involved Catherine, his patience wore thin, and his temper wasn't as controlled. "Eat up.

Afterward, we'll go to the mall, buy whatever you like, and then head over to your parents' house for dinner. It's been quite a while since you've gone back to see them, hasn't it?" he said, adding more food to her plate. Unwilling to deprive herself, she picked up her fork and began eating what she could. Regardless of the situation, she needed to ensure she maintained her health first and foremost. There was no point in taking out her frustrations on her stomach. "That's the right approach," Vance said, his voice returning to its gentle tone.

"But from now on, don't bring up that word again." She paused for a moment, then lowered her head and continued eating in silence. After finishing the meal, she had no desire to go shopping, but Vance insisted on it, driving them directly to the mall without further discussion. Over the course of their five-year marriage, the number of times Vance had accompanied her on a shopping trip could be counted on one hand. In fact, the occasions when they had appeared together in public at all were exceedingly rare.

The mall's lighting was intensely bright, even during the daytime, creating a glaring atmosphere that she found uncomfortable. Clutching her purse, she walked cautiously in his shadow. The first floor was lined with counters displaying luxury bags, watches, and jewelry. "Anything you like?" he asked, turning around. She didn't want to buy anything at all. She just wanted to go home. But before she could respond, someone called out from a distance, "Mr. Bradford!" "It's a new business partner I've recently connected with. I'll go over and greet them quickly," Vance explained.

"You can browse around on your own for a bit. I'll come find you shortly." Vance's clients were all people she didn't know. She watched as he walked over and shook hands with a gentleman not far away, then stood there awkwardly. Amid all this opulent luxury, there was nothing that caught her interest or that she wanted to purchase. Her thoughts were interrupted by the voice of a sales associate. "Miss, it's your turn." She turned around, realizing that she had inadvertently positioned herself in the queue at one of the luxury brand stores.

"Oh, no, thank you," she said hastily, quickly stepping away from the line. She wandered through the mall until, at a certain high-end watch counter, she caught sight of a familiar figure-Catherine. As she looked at the brand of watches on display, something heavy seemed to sink deep within her chest, and without fully realizing it, she found herself walking toward the counter. Accompanying Catherine in browsing the watches was Aiden. As Rebecca approached closer, the conversation between the two became increasingly audible. "If you like it, just go ahead and buy it," Aiden said.

Catherine hesitated. "But this doesn't seem right. Even though Vance gave me his supplementary card and told me to use it freely, I can't bring myself to buy something this pricey." Rebecca stopped in her tracks, unable to take another step. Her heart felt as heavy as her feet. "The supplementary card... Vance's supplementary card..." "Since he

gave it to you, he obviously meant for you to use it. When has Vance ever been the type to say one thing but mean another?" Aiden reassured her. "We've been friends for so many years. You know his character better than anyone.

If he gives something, it's with full sincerity." "I guess you're right." Catherine nodded, beginning to turn her wrist this way and that to show Aiden the watch from various angles. Rebecca saw it, too. "How does it look?" Catherine asked. "I really love this model. I've wanted it since college. Vance promised me he'd buy it for me upon graduation, but then..." A wave of mocking yet bitter amusement welled up in Rebecca's heart. But then, every year on her birthday and their wedding anniversary, Vance had given her watches of this same model.

Originally, she had thought that even if Vance didn't put much heart into it, at least he remembered her important dates and their anniversaries. The gifts might have been repetitive and lacking in thoughtfulness, but they were at least valuable. Now she realized that he did care. It was just that none of it had ever been directed toward her. "Well, Vance is fulfilling that promise now, isn't he?" Aiden laughed. "You can buy whatever you want these days. He can afford it all." "Then I'll go ahead and charge it?" Catherine said, her excitement visibly growing by the second.

Meanwhile, in another part of the mall, Vance had finished exchanging pleasantries with his business contact. The man, who was there to pick up his wife from shopping, learned that Vance was accompanying his wife as well and suggested they go over to say hello. As Vance walked in her direction, Rebecca quickly ducked out of sight, hiding behind a Roman column. Catherine spotted him and waved her hand enthusiastically. "Vance, over here!" Peering out from behind the column, Rebecca saw Vance and his business contact making their way toward Catherine.

She immediately linked her arm through Vance's and began swaying it playfully. "I want to buy this watch. Is that okay?" "Sure," Vance replied, his gaze softening. The sparkle in his eyes brought his entire face to life, a stark contrast to the bland, emotionless demeanor he always wore at home when he was with Rebecca. "Thank you. I'm going to swipe the card now," Catherine chirped, waving the supplementary card. The business contact smiled warmly. "You guys have such a deep bond. It's so touching, Mr. and Mrs.

Bradford." The pair blinked at the appellation, but neither of them attempted to correct the misunderstanding.

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