

Five Years of Marriage to Mr. Bradford

Novel - Chapter 7

Chapter 7

After a moment of awkwardness, Vance and Catherine quickly adjusted to the mistaken roles. They began chatting and laughing effortlessly with the business contact. Standing together, they looked like a well-matched couple. Rebecca watched silently, taking a photo with her phone. As she turned to leave, the sharp "needle" buried deep in her heart pricked her once more. A sharp, intricate pain that rapidly spread through her chest, even causing a sour ache at the tip of her nose.

Just as she was about to exit the mall, a voice called out, "Rebecca?" She turned to see someone waving vigorously from the descending escalator. To her surprise, it was her instructor from the dance academy. "Mrs. Lemke?" she exclaimed, her heart lifting with joy. Lauren Lemke quickly descended the escalator and approached, taking hold of Rebecca's hands with evident joy. "It's really you, Rebecca! It's been five years since we last saw each other. How have you been?" A wave of sadness washed over her. Five years had passed, and she had lived like a useless invalid.

Facing Lauren now, she felt embarrassed. Still holding Rebecca's hand, Lauren asked, "Are you busy? If not, let's find a place to have some afternoon tea." Rebecca wasn't busy at all. In the past, her deep-seated insecurity might have led her to shut herself off further, politely declining any connection to her old dance world and its people. But ever since she had opened that album of dance photos and videos on her phone, it felt as though a fissure had cracked open in her darkened sky. Suddenly, she yearned for light to pour in. She nodded, her eyes shimmering with tears.

"Sounds good." Lauren led her to a cozy teahouse located in the center of the first floor, and she asked, "How are the others? What have they been up to?" She had distanced herself from that world so completely and for so long that she had withdrawn from every single group chat with her former peers. "Do you really want to know?" Lauren gave her a perceptive look, aware of her situation. The promising student who had been guaranteed a spot in graduate school suddenly gave it up. Naturally, questions had arisen, and Lauren had even made a special trip to Soliaridge to visit her once.

Rebecca nodded emphatically, and Lauren proceeded to fill her in. Five years was indeed enough time to transform a person's life entirely. Her classmates had all moved forward in remarkable ways. Some had joined dance troupes and risen to become principal dancers. Others had pursued advanced studies abroad and now held doctoral degrees. A few had stayed on at the academy as instructors, nurturing the next generation of talent. Everyone had taken a big step forward in their respective paths. Only she had remained stagnant. But starting from today, she vowed to make a change.

She would strive to catch up, even if she could no longer dance. She would find her place in other fields. "I-I'm ready to give you an update on my progress too," she said, her eyes feeling hot and prickly. She felt she owed Lauren more than just a promise. "That would be wonderful," Lauren replied with a smile as warm and encouraging as ever. Rebecca leaned in close to Lauren's ear and whispered about her plans to study abroad. "This is fantastic! I knew it! None of my students are quitters!" Lauren exclaimed, gripping her hand tightly in excitement. "And it couldn't be better timing.

Our troupe has a European tour coming up. You should come along to get a sense of things and start adapting to life over there." "I..." Rebecca hesitated, not sure if her legs could handle the trip. She could no longer dance; even walking was a pain for her. And the graduate program she had applied for was in a theoretical field. "Nothing's impossible," Lauren encouraged her. "If that accident hadn't happened, you would have been a member of the youth dance troupe by now.

You can join us in a support role-as a runner, stage manager, or even helping with makeup." Lauren spoke with such firm conviction, treating Rebecca not as a cripple but as someone fully capable. Rebecca couldn't help but smile; she loved this feeling of not being defined or pitied because of her disability. Even if she couldn't dance, she could still contribute in other ways. She wasn't just a useless invalid. Lauren's phone vibrated with an incoming message. After reading it, she looked up and said, "It's my husband.

Would you mind if he joins us?" "Of course not," Rebecca replied with a smile, though she felt a bit timid about it. After five years of seclusion, she had grown unaccustomed to meeting new people, but she knew she had to start somewhere. This was her first step. "Then I'll have him come over," Lauren said, replying to the message. However, what Rebecca never could have anticipated was that Lauren's husband turned out to be the very same business contact Vance had met earlier. "Pascal is here on business, and I came along for a few days of leisure, not expecting to run into you.

It's fate," Lauren explained. Rebecca noticed that Vance, Catherine, and Pascal were walking together toward the teahouse. When the trio finally arrived at their table, Rebecca remained seated, observing the fascinating shifts in color on Vance's and Catherine's faces. "Come take a seat. This is my wife, Lauren. She is a dance teacher," Pascal said warmly. "And this is the gentleman I'm collaborating with on this trip, Mr. Vance Bradford, along with his wife." Vance's hand trembled slightly, and Catherine fidgeted restlessly. They both stared at Rebecca with tense anxiety.

Rebecca simply looked back at them, offering a faint, composed smile. Lauren also made introductions for Rebecca's benefit. "This is my husband, Pascal." Then, pointing to Rebecca, she added, "And this is one of my students-the one who had the greatest potential to win the National Dance Championship back in the day." Vance stiffened at the mention of the contest, and his gaze shifted downward, as if he were attempting to look at Rebecca's leg. Rebecca detected unmistakable pain in his eyes. Of course, he was in pain. If it hadn't been for her injury, he would never have married her.

In that case, the woman by his side now could have rightfully been his wife. Rebecca chuckled, "Actually, I am..." "Ah!" Catherine let out a sharp yelp at just the right moment, interrupting Rebecca mid-sentence. Rebecca paused, looking over. Catherine had spilled the tea, the hot liquid splashing all over her hand and clothes. "I'm so sorry. How embarrassing. This is really rude of me," she stammered, hurriedly grabbing napkins to wipe it up. "It's alright," Lauren said, not understanding the underlying tension, and even helped by passing more tissues.

The episode prevented Rebecca from revealing the truth. But if Rebecca had truly wanted to continue, no one could have stopped her. From across the table, Vance cast her a pleading glance, subtly shaking his head and mouthing, "Don't say it." Truth be told, she hadn't intended to say it in the first place. She had deliberately spoken only half the sentence, just to watch the two of them scramble in panic. Throughout this afternoon tea session, some sat as if on pins and needles, while others remained perfectly at ease.

As Rebecca reached for her teacup, Lauren suddenly noticed something in her hand. "Is that a wedding ring? You're married? To whom?" The question landed like a bolt from the blue, causing Vance and Catherine to pale dramatically. Rebecca glanced at Vance's hand resting beside his teacup, a mocking smile curling at the corner of her lips. He had never once worn a wedding ring; the pair from their ceremony had been removed immediately after the wedding and left to gather dust somewhere unknown. "Yes, I've been married for five years now," she replied calmly.

"My husband's last name is Bradford." Continue to read this book for free

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