

Five Years of Marriage to Mr. Bradford (by Koi Fish)

Chapter 761

Even though she knew it was pointless, Rebecca couldn't help rambling.

But after she finished, Vance still hadn't moved.

"Why aren't you leaving?" she urged.

In the silent classroom, she suddenly heard a sharp intake of breath. She thought she had misheard and listened again.

It was real, coming from Vance. In the faint moonlight, something seemed to be glistening on his cheeks.

"Are you crying?" She was stunned. "Why are you crying?"

No one answered her.

She reached out to touch his face but felt nothing—her fingers passed through like mist. Only the bracelet on her wrist shimmered in the dark.

"Because of the bad test score? It's okay. Your foundation is solid. If you study seriously, you'll do great on the next exam.

"Or... is it because the teacher scolded you? I know you're proud and have never been criticized before. But she didn't say anything too harsh. She genuinely cares about you and tries to understand you.

"Hey, if you're really sad, just cry it out. I don't know why you're crying, but holding emotions for too long needs an outlet. Ugh, you can't hear anything I say anyway. Forget it."

Even though she knew he couldn't hear, she kept talking softly until she was tired. She felt she would probably wake up back in Paris, just like last time, when she got sleepy here and woke up there.

She yawned, hugged her knees, rested her head on them, and soon fell asleep.

This time, she didn't wake up immediately. She felt herself roll over and continue sleeping, nestled in a warm embrace. She slept deeply and peacefully.

When she woke again, she was indeed back in her Paris home. The warmth came from a large teddy bear that Gabriel had given her the day before.

Holding the bear, she kept seeing Vance's tear-streaked face from the dream.

"So, he could cry, too? And dropping outside the top 50? That's ridiculous. Would he have an entirely different life in that world? It's possible."

Everyone had their own path in their own world. Vance could live an ordinary life or even a messed-up one. That had nothing to do with her.

Why did she keep entering these dreams, seeing everything, and getting involved? And even when she got involved, she could do nothing except watch him change.

"What's the point?" She wondered when she would enter the dream again.

Winter was coming, followed by the winter break and then the final semester of high school.

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Chapter 762

Rebecca didn't dream again for a long time.

In Paris with her family, she welcomed the first snow, followed by many more. They had a lively Christmas and returned to the States for the New Year.

She met with Jenny. The two of them ate, shopped, had afternoon tea, and walked through the old alleys and lanes of Soliaridge from their childhood.

Gabriel had urgent business in Paris and left before the vacation ended. Kaitlyn had rarely come back and wanted to stay longer, so they agreed to wait for Gabriel's next trip to take all three of them back together.

They ended up staying until spring. When schools reopened, Rebecca and Jenny decided to visit their old teachers together. Back on campus, they lingered outside the classrooms where they had once studied.

"Becky, remember? Your seat was right there." Jenny pointed inside the classroom. "I sat next to you."

That was their classroom before they split into arts and science tracks. She and Jenny had sat beside each other, while Vance had been in the same group as her.

"After we split tracks, we changed classrooms. Come on, let's go see the senior building," Jenny said, grabbing her hand and running.

For the sake of the seniors' studies, classes had been moved to a separate old building. When they got there, they found it cordoned off.

"Are they renovating?" Jenny asked a passing student.

"Yeah," the student replied. "This building hasn't been used for a while. The seniors moved to the new building."

"I see." Jenny nodded.

They couldn't visit their old classrooms, but Jenny managed to reach their former homeroom teacher, who was now a vice principal. She pulled Rebecca along to the office.

Some of their old teachers had retired. The one they met had been their teacher before the track split. After warm greetings, they talked about the building scheduled for demolition.

The teacher smiled at Rebecca. "Thanks to your donation, we built the new one. Students are already using it this year. The old one will be renovated into a library."

But in fact, the donation came from Vance.

"It wasn't me." Rebecca didn't want to take credit for something that wasn't hers.

"I know, but it was donated in your name, right? That building even has a name—Quest for Knowledge. The donor requested it."

That was a meaningful name.

"How have you all been?" the teacher asked, a hint of hesitation in her voice.

Rebecca realized she was probably asking about Vance.

"We're all doing well," Rebecca replied with a smile.

Everyone except Vance and Darren was doing well. She couldn't bring herself to say the second part.

After chatting a while longer, Rebecca and Jenny said goodbye and left the school.

They had lunch together before heading to their separate homes. Jenny never once mentioned Vance's name. Rebecca knew Jenny would always hold a grudge on her behalf.

Back home, Rebecca felt a little low. After greeting Josette, she went to her room to sleep.

Three months apart, she entered the dream again. This time, the scene she saw was heartbreaking. Vance was playing pool. Those with him were Aiden, Lucas, and Catherine.

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Chapter 763

What Rebecca didn't understand was that even in the other timeline, Aiden, Lucas, and the others had excellent grades.

Otherwise, they wouldn't have gotten into the same university as Vance. So, why did they all look like they didn't do well in this timeline?

"Aiden, we've been out for two hours already. Should we head back?" Lucas said.

"What are you afraid of?" Aiden brushed it off. "What month is it already? We've learned everything we're supposed to learn by now. If you know it, you know it. If you don't, cramming more won't help. Might as well come out and relax."

Lucas sighed. "If we keep skipping classes, the teachers are going to call our parents."

Sure enough, they were skipping classes. Rebecca listened with rising anger.

Aiden shrugged. "Let them call. At this stage, they won't dare to punish us. They can only coax us."

Lucas sighed again, looking distracted. He was timid in both timelines.

Aiden added, "Alright, look at Vance. He's not even anxious. Why are you so worried?"

"Exactly." Catherine came up and stopped right in front of Vance. "Studying is so tiring. Have a cigarette to refresh yourself."

She brought a cigarette to Vance's lips.

Rebecca panicked. Forgetting that Vance couldn't see her at all, she instantly floated in front of him and roared, "Vance, don't smoke!"

But Vance took the cigarette into his mouth. Catherine flicked open a lighter and lit it for him.

Rebecca remembered that the last time she saw him smoke, he would still choke on it. This time, both the way he inhaled and his posture were practiced.

"Vance, you're really disappointing me!" She floated in front of him, watching him and Catherine blow smoke, overwhelmed by a deep sense of powerlessness.

If she could, she would slap him hard right now. Unfortunately, she couldn't do anything.

While she was simmering with anger, a figure rushed over like a whirlwind. In the next instant, a loud smack rang out.

It was the young Rebecca... She slapped Vance across the face and snatched the cigarette from his mouth.

Rebecca thought the young Rebecca would throw the cigarette into the trash or stomp on it. But to her shock, the girl pressed the burning cigarette butt directly against Vance's neck.

The others might not have heard it, but perhaps because she was floating in the air, Rebecca clearly heard a sharp sizzle and smelled a faint scorched scent.

The cigarette butt was extinguished. Everyone was stunned. Even Vance froze on the spot.

The young Rebecca's actions were fast and bold. But it wasn't over. She pointed straight at Vance's nose, calm and resolute. "I'll count to three. Come with me."

Aiden and the others finally snapped out of it and started moving closer to Vance.

Lucas tried mediating. "Vance, maybe you should..."

Aiden interrupted, his tone mocking. "Man, you're not actually going to take a hit and listen to her, are you? That's pathetic..."

Before he could finish, there was a blur. No one saw it clearly, but the young Rebecca suddenly leaped into the air, spun, and delivered a flying kick straight to his face, knocking him to the ground.

Floating in the air, Rebecca cheered.

Her younger self had improved her spinning kick again.

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Chapter 764

Rebecca suddenly thought of her past life, and her eyes stung with emotion. The girl in front of her was much tougher than she had been.

Maybe it was because the young Rebecca had met Kaitlyn and Gabriel early on and had enough support. She didn't have to be suppressed by her parents, nor did she have to worry about Josette being bullied by them.

Or perhaps there were other reasons. Either way, she believed this girl would live a much better life than she ever had.

The current situation had clearly taken Vance by surprise. He stood there dumbfounded.

Lucas took several steps back, desperate to distance himself from Vance. Only Catherine let out a soft laugh and moved closer to him. "Vance, you..."

"Shut your mouth!" The young Rebecca pointed at Catherine. "If you don't want to end up lying on the ground like him, then shut up!"

Catherine smiled awkwardly. Seeing that Vance had no reaction at all, she subconsciously stepped back as well.

Right then, two voices rang out at the same time. "Don't you dare touch her!"

Darren and Jethro rushed over after learning Rebecca had come here. They were afraid she would be at a disadvantage. They shouted before even entering, but when they saw the scene inside, they were also stunned.

Rebecca stood in the middle, as if owning the place.

The owner of the pool hall also came over after hearing the commotion.

Perfect! She was looking for him. "Are you the owner?"

"Yes..." The owner had no idea what was happening.

The young Rebecca looked around, spotting Darren and Jethro. She pointed at the pool table. "Tear it down. I'll pay for it."

Both guys were shocked, and the owner froze.

The young Rebecca scanned a QR code to pay. The prompt of receiving \$20,000 rang out in the store.

The owner looked at his phone and was even more shocked.

With her finger still pointing at the pool table, the young Rebecca declared, "I know your pool hall is innocent. Some scum wanted to play pool, and as the owner, you bear no responsibility.

"But today, I'm being unreasonable. I'm tearing down your pool table. And in the future, if he..."

She pointed at Vance and continued, "If he comes here to play pool again, I'll tear down the entire store!"

Her words stunned everyone, including the floating Rebecca in their midst.

The owner quickly bowed. "Miss, take it easy. I'll refund the money. Please don't destroy the table or the store. From now on, these people are not allowed to come in."

Harmony brought prosperity. No one wanted their shop to be smashed every few days.

Most importantly, these were still minors. If their parents came to demand answers or the police got involved, he would be in trouble.

The young Rebecca pointed at Vance. "I'm only concerned with him. The others have nothing to do with me. I don't even know them."

Her gaze swept across Aiden, Lucas, and Catherine before landing on Vance. With a stern face, she said, "One..."

Before she could continue, Vance started walking toward her.

The young Rebecca snorted coldly, turned around, and started leaving. Darren and Jethro quickly followed behind her.

Darren didn't forget about the 20,000 dollars. He showed the owner his payment code, and the owner transferred the money back. "Give it to that girl."

The owner was worried the girl would come again.

Rebecca followed them outside. They were heading back toward the school.

Darren also stepped out. The four of them walked in silence, trailing behind the young Rebecca.

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Chapter 765

When they arrived at school and reached the teaching building, the young Rebecca told Darren and Jethro to head back to class first.

She stopped and kept the dejected Vance behind. The shadowy Rebecca floated between the two of them, listening.

Neither of them spoke. The young Rebecca stared straight at Vance, while he kept his head lowered like a problem youth who had made a mistake.

"Vance..." The young Rebecca finally spoke. "Last semester's final exams... you ranked 200th in the science class. What were you thinking?"

"What? 200th?" Rebecca wanted to say Vance deserved a few more slaps, or better yet, a good beating.

Vance remained silent.

The young Rebecca thought for a moment. "Some people say you've been hanging out with people outside of school and have been led astray. But I don't think so.

"You've always been self-disciplined. If you didn't want to go bad, no one could lead you astray. So, does your grandmother know you're like this now?"

Mentioning his grandmother finally made Vance look up, a flash of anxiety in his eyes.

"Don't worry," the young Rebecca said. "I won't tell your grandmother. Compared to you, I feel sorrier for her. I won't let her be heartbroken over an unfilial son like you. I just..."

She paused. "Never mind. This is the last time I'm coming to find you. If you don't want to talk, I won't force you. From now on, it's up to you. If you want to keep falling, then fall. I'll just pretend I never knew you."

Seeing that she was about to leave, Vance finally opened his mouth. "I..."

But nothing more came.

"Is it because of me?" the young Rebecca asked.

The floating Rebecca suddenly remembered what Vance's teacher had said to him. It was something that sounded like comforting him over a breakup.

Could it be that Vance had become like this because the young Rebecca was ignoring him again? Or was it because she was now closer to Darren?

Vance shook his head. "It has nothing to do with you."

The young Rebecca fell silent.

A bitter smile appeared on Vance's face. "You're not her. It has nothing to do with you."

"You..." The young Rebecca looked shocked and couldn't speak for a long time.

Vance smiled bitterly and repeated, "You're not her."

"But how did you..." the young Rebecca stammered, "How did you..."

"I know," Vance said calmly.

The two fell silent again.

"I am... but..." The young Rebecca spoke haltingly, searching for the right words.

"It doesn't matter." Vance looked up and saw Darren leaning over the second-floor corridor railing. "Go back to class. And thank you."

The young Rebecca was quiet for a moment, then said softly, "No matter what, she wouldn't want to see you like this. Take care of yourself."

With that, she ran off.

"I know what I'm doing," Vance said to the empty air.

Rebecca floated in front of him. Her head was starting to feel heavy as Josette's voice kept calling her, telling her to wake up for dinner.

She hadn't heard clearly what the younger Rebecca and Vance had said to each other, and she was growing even more dazed now.

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Chapter 766

Rebecca woke up in her bedroom in Soliaridge. She had only slept for an entire afternoon.

She couldn't quite remember what Vance had said to the young Rebecca at the end. She just felt drained.

A few days later, Gabriel returned to the States. He took half a month to handle company affairs, then took everyone back to Paris.

From then on, Rebecca found it difficult to enter those dreams again.

One month, two months, three months...

She even wondered if those experiences had just been a dream, like in so many novels, where the protagonist lived another long life, only for it all to turn out to be a dream.

Summer arrived, bringing the Edinburgh Festival once again.

Rebecca had returned to the dance troupe. After working on new pieces for over half a year, they finally premiered a new program right before the festival. Once again, they stunned audiences with American traditional dance.

During the festival, she reunited with old friends from Ireland, who sincerely invited her there. Both she and Heather happily accepted.

After returning from Edinburgh, the troupe took a short break. Some members went on vacation, and others returned home.

Rebecca went back to Kaitlyn's house. It was already late August.

While sitting on the balcony having afternoon tea with Josette, Rebecca thought to herself that in that dream world, the college applications should be over by now. Everyone probably had their acceptance letters.

She wondered if they got into the schools they wanted.

"Becky?" Josette called out.

"Hmm?" Rebecca snapped back.

"Anything bothering you? You were completely lost in thought."

"Oh, nothing. Just recalling the performance in Edinburgh."

She shook her head, pushing those thoughts away.

But that very night, after telling herself that those people and events were just a dream, she entered the dream world again.

Like the last time, she was floating in the air, watching them having dinner together at Vance's restaurant.

No Aiden, Lucas, or Catherine—just their own school friends. There weren't even any other customers. It was just them.

They seemed to have drunk quite a bit. The atmosphere felt both sentimental and emotional.

"I don't want to leave... Vance..." Jethro bawled, hugging Vance.

Rebecca remembered that Jethro had always prepared two paths. In the other world, when he didn't get into his dream school, he went abroad to study. It seemed his fate hadn't changed.

"Alright, we agreed last night that everyone would be happy. Real men don't shed tears," Vance said, pulling him off.

Jethro was probably drunk. His sobs turned into full-on wailing.

"Guys, I'll never forget any of you." He turned to Jenny. "You're the only one staying in Soliaridge. You have to wait for us here."

Jenny's fate hadn't changed either. She had gotten into a local university.

Jethro then turned to Vance, Darren, and Rebecca. "You three are heading to Arelmoor. When I come back, the first stop will be there. You will host me."

"Sure thing."

"We'll definitely host you."

"Just come."

The three of them answered in unison.

"You already bought a house in Arelmoor, Vance. I'm staying at your place," Jethro added.

So, the young Rebecca had successfully gotten into Arelmoor Dance Academy. Darren was going with her instead of heading abroad. That was wonderful.

Vance was going to Arelmoor, too. She couldn't help but wonder about the relationship between the three of them.

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Chapter 767

Floating among them, Rebecca pondered. Their friendship didn't seem broken, or they wouldn't be sitting together for dinner.

Jethro couldn't let go. He hugged each one of them, crying nonstop and making everyone emotional. Even Jenny and the young Rebecca cried.

Darren comforted them, then suggested calling it a night and sending everyone home.

It was already the early hours of the morning. They went downstairs to catch rides. The young Rebecca had a bodyguard car that could fit four people.

"You guys take the car. I still have something to do," Vance said.

"You take it. I can grab a cab," Darren said after helping the three teary-eyed ones into the car.

"No need. Really." Vance waved a hand. "Get in. I still need to clean up the restaurant."

Darren was silent for a moment. "You're handling the paperwork tomorrow?"

"Yeah," Vance replied. "So, I can take my grandma to Arelmoor sooner."

Darren nodded and patted his shoulder. "Let me know if you need help."

"Go on. I'll be fine," Vance said, pushing Darren into the car.

He watched the car drive away, then went back inside the building and returned to the restaurant. In his office, he began packing his things, like personal items, books he had read, spare clothes, several pairs of shoes, and various odds and ends.

He also took the business license from his desk.

Rebecca floated over and saw it was in Irene's name. That made sense. He hadn't been of age when he opened the restaurant.

Darren had just mentioned paperwork. It looked like the restaurant was changing owners. In the other world, Vance sold it before starting college.

She didn't know the exact date because, by then, the two of them had drifted apart.

After carefully wiping the license, he put it away, locked the door, and left the restaurant.

Rebecca followed his car all the way home. Irene was still sorting through things—picking up one item after another, reluctant to part with anything.

"Grandma, don't bring too much. We've already furnished the house in Arelmoor. Just bring the important documents," Vance said, looking at the several large open suitcases in the living room.

Irene smiled. "You're right. I'm getting old and fussy."

Vance looked over at the things she had packed, his heart tightening. He walked over and squatted in front of her. "Grandma, are you reluctant to leave Soliaridge?"

She shook her head. "Not really. At my age, getting to live in Arelmoor is something to be happy about. It's all thanks to you. I get to enjoy your success."

"As long as you're happy, Grandma."

"Of course, I'm happy. You are always meant to attend the best university."

The best university? Rebecca felt relieved at those words.

At the start of the last semester, Vance had lost motivation. He hung out with Aiden's group and dropped outside the top 200.

She had been so worried.

Thankfully, the result was good. He was going to the best university.

Vance's eyes dimmed slightly. "Grandma, the restaurant transfer is tomorrow. I'll need you to come sign with me."

"Alright," she agreed, patting his hand. "You've had a long day. Go rest early."

"Okay." He stood up, picked up his bag, and went to his room, where he immediately started taking off his clothes.

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Chapter 768

Vance started with his T-shirt, then his belt and pants.

Was he going to take off his underwear without going into the bathroom?

"Vance!" she shrieked.

But obviously, he couldn't hear her. He just continued undressing.

Rebecca forcefully turned her gaze away and finally managed to look elsewhere. Only when she heard water running in the bathroom did she breathe a sigh of relief and look around the room again.

His things had all been packed. He was clearly ready to leave for Arelmoor at any time.

On his desk sat a neat stack of items. She floated over, wanting to see his plans, but suddenly noticed the same scrap paper she had written on sitting right on top of the pile.

[Vance, don't forget what you promised me. Don't hang out with Aiden, Lucus, or Catherine. Don't go to the same university as them. Don't be friends with them.]

Her transparent shadow had struggled to write those words. There were even his math notes on the same paper. That was about six months ago, and he hadn't thrown it away.

"Why is he still keeping it?" she wondered.

Vance came out of the bathroom wearing nothing but a towel around his waist.

At this age, he was lean. Though his muscles were toned from sports, he had that characteristic slimness of youth. He walked around the room openly, showing off his young body.

"These are all coming with me to Arelmoor," he muttered to himself, putting the stack from the desk into a suitcase.

Rebecca hovered over the pile and watched as the paper with her message and his math notes was carefully packed away. Just earlier, he had told his grandmother not to bring this or that, yet he was bringing a crumpled piece of paper?

"Vance," she called from inside the suitcase. "You..."

Before she could finish, the lid suddenly closed and shut her inside.

"Vance!" She pounded on the lid, shouting.

He couldn't hear anything, just sighed. "I really wish I could take you with me."

There was a small gap in the suitcase. Being a transparent shadow, she squeezed and wriggled through it. Once out, she saw Vance holding a Doraemon doll, talking to it.

"You're supposed to grant every wish, right?" Vance tapped the doll's head. "You liar."

So, he had a childish side.

Rebecca floated onto the doll's head and stared at Vance's face. "What other wishes do you have?"

He suddenly looked up, and she jumped in fright, feeling like their eyes met for a split second. She panicked and fell off the doll's head.

The fall jolted her awake, and she was back in her Paris home.

After this, she didn't dream again for a long time, but she no longer felt anxious or worried. From this latest dream, she knew her friends had all gotten good results.

Everyone had gotten into good universities. Darren hadn't gone abroad, and Vance had cut ties with Aiden and the others.

She even thought this might be her last dream—that it had come only to show her this happy ending. So, from August, she focused on dancing until Christmas, when she was invited to perform in Ireland.

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Chapter 769

Winter in Ireland was the familiar blanket of pure white snow.

After checking into the hotel, Rebecca and the troupe members threw themselves into rehearsals and run-throughs. They were exhausted by the end of the day.

A few new members visiting Ireland for the first time wanted to explore the night market. Despite her exhaustion, Rebecca went along. They ate their way through the streets and eventually reached the ceramics stall.

Those two large ceramic jars were still in her Paris home. She stood in front of the stall, holding one of the jars and staring at it for a long time.

The vendor enthusiastically asked if she liked it and offered her a good price. Only then did she snap out of it, smile, and put the jar down.

When a troupe member called her over, she followed them to walk away.

That night before bed, her mind was filled with the image of Vance turning back with a smile in the dim light. She entered the dream again, arriving at Arelmoor Dance Academy.

It was also winter, and the first snow had fallen. In her familiar alma mater, she saw Darren bundled up warmly, standing beside a sculpture. Snow covered his shoulders.

He held his phone, looking stunned and confused. The young Rebecca ran over from a distance, waving and calling out to him. She bounded up like a deer, beaming with genuine happiness.

"Darren!" She panted a little. "I'm so sorry. I can't go out with you today. We have to rehearse the New Year's performance. No afternoon classes means rehearsal starts right away, and the teacher won't let me take time off."

He looked at her in disbelief and bewilderment.

"What's wrong?" She took his hand. "Are you disappointed? I promise, after the performance is over, I'll spend lots of time with you, okay?"

He snapped out of it and smiled gently. "Of course, dance comes first. It's fine. You go ahead. I'll go with my dormmates instead."

"Okay," she smiled. "Take lots of pictures and show me!"

"Sure!" He seemed to want to touch her hat but pulled his hand back halfway.

She gave him a tight hug. "I'll head back now. Sorry for making you come out in such heavy snow."

He stood stiffly, even forgetting to return the hug. Her mind was preoccupied with the rehearsal, so she didn't notice anything strange. She simply waved goodbye and ran off.

Darren remained in place, murmuring blankly, "How is this possible? What's going on?"

Instead of going out, he returned to his dorm, where he continued to stare into space. Rebecca's vision followed him the whole time.

When he took out his phone and lit up the screen, she was shocked. The wallpaper was a photo of her. To be precise, it was one from the other world when she was kidnapped and taken out to sea. It was her dancing under the moonlight.

But how was that possible? Only she and Vance from the other world had this photo. Yet it appeared on Darren's phone in this world.

She zipped over in front of Darren, who looked completely bewildered. Then he opened a drawer and took out a notebook.

Rebecca leaned in and saw the words: [To Darren Horton.]

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Chapter 770

It read: [If you see this message, please don't find it strange. And don't ask why. Because I don't know why either. In this universe, there are countless things humans cannot explain.

[I was fortunate to be your classmate and friend, fortunate to walk in your footsteps, and fortunate to briefly become you and make decisions on your behalf. I hope the rest of your life is safe, smooth, happy, and fulfilling.]

Floating above the words, Rebecca saw Darren's eyelashes gradually grow wet.

A bell rang out from somewhere unidentifiable, the sound striking painfully and sharply in her chest. Faint chants drifted in from the distance.

Her temples began to throb, and she seemed to hear a faraway voice from deep in her memory: "If there's an afterlife, I really wish I could have helped him fulfill all his dreams."

Some kind of notification sound rang out. Rebecca fell out of the dream and sat up abruptly.

"Sorry. I forgot to silence my phone," Heather said apologetically.

They were sharing a room, and the message alert had woken Rebecca.

Rebecca shook her head. "It's fine. I... was just dreaming."

"A nightmare?" Heather asked with concern.

Rebecca hesitated, not sure about it. "It's still early. Get some more sleep."

She lay back down and quickly closed her eyes.

The words in Darren's notebook were still vivid in her mind, written in that all-too-familiar handwriting. She desperately wanted to re-enter the dream to see more and understand what had happened.

Not only could she not return to the dream, but she couldn't fall back asleep at all.

She simply lay awake until dawn. It was still early, and their rehearsal wasn't until the afternoon. The troupe members were still sleeping.

Looking at the heavy snow outside, she thought of the dream—the first snow covering the campus in Arelmoor.

She bundled up warmly and left the hotel. The events from last night's dream weighed on her chest like a stone, making it hard to breathe.

She thought a walk outside might clear her head, but it was so cold. There were almost no pedestrians, and the wind stung her forehead.

She took a few steps, then intended to turn back, until the distant sound of a choir drifted from a church. As if pulled by an unseen hand, she moved toward it.

The sidewalk was buried under deep, fresh snow. Each step demanded caution, the very reason she'd nearly retreated. Yet a strange, insistent force drew her forward.

At last, she stood before the church doors.

Inside, clusters of white roses flanked the altar and pillars. In the crisp winter light, they seemed both sacred and frozen solid.

The choir's voices rose softly, woven through the low murmur of the pipe organ. They were singing funeral hymns.

Rebecca remained at the threshold, her gaze locked on the coffin at the front, ringed with white roses. A violent contraction seized her heart. She could not move.

When the last hymn faded, the pastor invited the deceased's family to speak, but a heavy silence fell.

No one rose.

"He has no family," someone whispered.

Rebecca couldn't see the speaker. Her vision had been blurred by tears.

A figure stood up. A voice, achingly familiar, cut through the quiet. "I'll do it."

Rebecca's tears poured down at the sound and sight of the speaker.

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Chapter 771

The man started, "He lived a life full of ups and downs. He tasted success and made his share of mistakes. He spent his whole life begging for forgiveness from the people he loved, and he passed away in pain. May he find peace in heaven, and may he make no more mistakes in the afterlife."

Rebecca's head buzzed loudly, her ears feeling clogged. The man at the podium spoke at length, but only fragments of his words broke through the haze.

When he finished, he looked up and froze at the sight of her. His face went pale as he hurried over.

"Becky..." He gripped her shoulders, his brows knitting tightly at her tear-streaked face.

Over his shoulder, through blurred vision, Rebecca watched the mourners rise one by one and place flowers on the casket. Among them was a familiar figure—the Irish innkeeper she'd met before.

"Becky..." Gabriel stared into her glazed eyes, trying to pull her into a hug.

She shoved him away, her voice raw. "Tell me, who's lying in that casket?"

His lips parted, but no words came out.

"Why are you here?" Rebecca pressed. "Whose death would make you give a eulogy as family? Gabe, tell me. It has to be someone I know, right?"

Questions spilled out, leaving him no room to dodge.

"Say something!" she cried desperately.

He shut his eyes briefly. "I'm sorry, Becky."

"No, you don't owe anyone an apology." She shook her head vigorously. "You're the best cousin anyone could ask for. I just... want to know who's lying in there."

He drew in a shaky breath. "It's... Vance."

A broken laugh escaped her. Her premonition hadn't been wrong after all, but hearing it aloud still shattered something inside.

She laughed until her legs buckled. Gabriel caught her as she collapsed into his arms.

"I'm sorry. I kept this from you the whole time," he whispered.

She kept shaking her head. He had nothing to apologize for, not after having done so much for her. He was the best cousin in the whole world.

With a soft sigh, Gabriel guided her to the last pew as the recessional hymn began and mourners filed out.

Rebecca knew little about Irish funerals. Only when the pallbearers lifted the casket did the truth hit her they were about to lower it into the ground.

She lunged forward, but Gabriel held her firmly in place.

"Don't go. Just stay here and pray for him, please," he said, his grip tight. "I'll tell you everything, one detail at a time."

Her mind remained foggy, his words only half-registering through the haze. His heart ached for her, his arm wrapping around her shoulders. "Listen to me, okay?"

Fresh tears spilled down her cheeks. She would always listen to him. No matter what life threw at her, she would trust him forever.

The church slowly emptied. The last to leave was the innkeeper, who glanced at Rebecca with guilty eyes.

He took off his hat and spoke apologetically. "We didn't know what American customs were like, so we held the service following Irish traditions."

"We're already so grateful," Gabriel responded quickly. "You've helped us more than you know these past few years."

The innkeeper pulled a thick envelope out of his jacket pocket and handed it to Rebecca. "Mr. Bradford left a letter. Said if you ever earned of his passing. I should give it to you. And if you never found out, it was to stay sealed. Now...."

Five Years of Marriage to Mr. Bradford (by Koi Fish)

Chapter 772

The innkeeper handed her the envelope. "Now I've carried out his last wish."

"Thanks." Rebecca took it, her eyes landing on the characters scrawled across the front.

It read: [To Rebecca Perry].

For a moment, she didn't have the courage to tear it open.

Gabriel squeezed her hand. "If you're not ready, don't."

A bitter, resentful lump rose in her throat. "I'm never opening it."

"Okay, we won't." Gabriel kept holding her hand, then spoke quietly. "He had the same illness as his father. They caught it earlier when they rescued him after the attack."

He studied her blank expression and tightened his grip. "He begged me not to tell you about losing his legs or the diagnosis. He hid away, fought it for two years, but couldn't beat it.

"Last year, sensing the end, he insisted on coming to Ireland. He slipped into a coma soon after arriving. I got him into the ICU, where he stayed for over a year and passed yesterday."

The timeline clicked into place in her foggy mind: ICU last year, coma... gone yesterday, one year later.

No wonder Darren had always felt so familiar. No wonder the young Rebecca had ended up with him. No wonder the dream version of him had reacted so strangely.

"If there's an afterlife, I really wish I could have helped him fulfill all his dreams."

A hollow laugh escaped her again, and her eyes stung.

"Becky..." Gabriel stroked her hair. "Restrain your sorrow. Vance disappeared just because he didn't want you grieving. Besides, you don't owe him anything. You two are even."

She smiled bitterly. "Are we? Even?"

The earlier eulogy echoed in her mind. "He spent his whole life begging for forgiveness from the people he loved."

In the end, she tore open the envelope anyway. Her name stared back from the top of the page.

[Rebecca,

[I really didn't want you to ever read this. Wouldn't it have been better if I had simply melted away like a C snowflake in Ireland, quier and unseen? But you found me.

[Promise me you won't be sad, okay? My life has been one long failure, filled with so many stupid mistakes. I don't deserve your tears, and don't have the right to ask for them.

[I'd rather you hate me forever than grieve for me Hate me Rebecca. I don't deserve your forgiveness, and | don't even have the nerve to beg for it.

[See? Even the universe couldn't stand the pain I caused you. It punished me with this illness and took me early.]

[I've carried all the bad luck away with me. Your future will only hold health, joy, happiness, and beautiful things.

[Becky, can I call you that one last time, like family? Don't look back from this day onward.

[Once I'm gone, all the bad blood between us ends. Forget the past, move forward bravely and happily, and never look back, okay?

[Goodbye, Becky.

[Yours, Vance]

The letter was dated three winters ago, when snow blanketed Ireland.

Five Years of Marriage to Mr. Bradford (by Koi Fish)

Chapter 774

"Probably because..." the young Vance said softly, "I'm dying."

"What, no way," Rebecca blurted. "You're only 22."

A bitter, hollow smile crossed his gaunt face. "What if I was only ever meant to live until 22?"

"What are you talking about?" she said incredulously.

In the other world, Vance had lived well into his 30s.

"If you hadn't saved him, he'd have died in that car accident," he said matter-of-factly.

Rebecca was dumbstruck. That was something she couldn't refute, but how did he know about the other world?

"You're not the only person who dreams," he explained, frowning.

She was about to ask what he'd dreamed about when he suddenly winced in pain.

"Vance!" Panic surged through her. She looked around the private room, but there wasn't another person. "Doesn't anyone take care of you?"

He gasped, struggling to get the words out. "I... don't have any family left."

Her eyes burned as reality sank in. The only family that cared for him had passed.

"I... will go get a nurse," she said, making a move toward the door.

"It's useless." He called out to stop her. "They can't see you."

"Then how can I help? What do you need?" she said anxiously, willing to do anything to relieve his pain.

He looked up, his eyes red-rimmed. "Can we... hold hands?"

She froze, and he gave another hollow, bitter laugh. "No? Forget it then."

"It's fine." She stared at his pale, bony fingers, then slipped her hand into his.

He squeezed with everything he had left, but it was barely a whisper of pressure. Tears then slipped down his cheeks.

"You're so cruel, leaving me here all alone!" he choked out, his voice thick with resentment. "If I weren't dying, you wouldn't have come back, would you?"

"I didn't..." she tried to explain, but this felt weird.

She should have been weighed down by grief, but his words tangled her feelings into something far more complicated. She was a woman from over a decade in the future, not the girl his age.

"You are!" He grew stubborn, fixated on the idea. "It's always like this. You only appear when I'm hurting. When I studied and worked hard, you never showed up."

She remembered his rebellious phase. "You smoked, played pool, and hung out with the wrong crowd on purpose, didn't you?"

He stayed silent.

"Right?"

"So what if I did? If I hadn't acted out, would you have returned?" His voice cracked with bitterness. "In those four years you were gone, got scholarships, filed patents, started my company, and bought a mansion in Arelmoor. Did you ever come back?"

"But..." She paused, knowing there was some truth in it. "I can't control when I come back. It's not up to me."

"Do you want to come back?" he asked, slowly lacing their fingers together.

"I..."

"I know you don't want to. You hate me..." He choked up again. "But I'm not him. That one you saved was a total piece of garbage. That's not me. I've always kept my nose clean and have never liked anyone else. I've only ever liked you. In those four years you were gone, I never liked anyone else."

"Vance, stop. Have you ever thought that I might not even be real? To me, you're just a boy from a dream. None of this is real," she reasoned.

"Not real?" He cut her off, squeezing her fingers. "Is this not your hand? Can't you feel mine? Or do we need to hug?"

He tried to sit up, but even with everything he had, he could only lift his head a little off the pillow before it fell back down.

With his movement, the heart monitor started to jump erratically. A nurse rushed over at the blare and pushed open the door.

"What's wrong? Are you okay?" she asked quickly.

"I'm fine," Vance muttered weakly, waving a hand.

The nurse checked on him. "Press the call button if you need anything, okay?"

"Yeah."

The nurse left, and the room went quiet.

Five Years of Marriage to Mr. Bradford (by Koi Fish)

Chapter 775

Rebecca drifted closer to adjust his pillows so he could lie more comfortably.

Vance suddenly reached out and wrapped an arm around her neck. Though faint, she could feel the pressure.

"I'm sorry for scaring you," he whispered into her ear.

She stayed still. "It's okay."

His hand went lax, and she drifted back up into the air.

His voice was barely audible. "I'm fine now. You can go."

"Huh?"

"Go back to your world. That Vance is rotten. Don't ever forgive him. I'm happy to see you today. Becky, can I call you that?"

"Yeah." Her eyes stung at his bitter tone.

She had never felt so helpless with words. Nothing came to mind—nothing that could reach him.

This was a disease that even ten years later couldn't be fixed, not to mention the medical conditions of this era. Sharp as he was, he had probably known what was wrong with him and how much time he had left.

"Becky, Becky..." he called out over and over, like it had magic.

Her voice cracked. "I... am still here."

"If you ever run into him again, don't like him," he said softly. "Don't get close to him. Treat him like a stranger."

"Him?" she echoed bitterly.

Vance from the other world had passed away. She'd not run into him again, not in this life.

"No matter in a dream or afterlife, stay far away. Ignore any version of him, okay?"

Her lips parted, but she couldn't bring herself to say either "yes" or "no".

"I'll take that as a yes." A faint smile tugged at the corner of his mouth, even as tears slipped down his cheeks. "Go now. Leave this room and never come back."

With that, an invisible force pushed her out. Turning back, she found the door was ajar and could only see part of the room.

The heart monitor's green line flattened into a straight line, and a bony hand slipped off the bed.

"Vance!" Her scream tore through the empty hallway, unheard by anyone.

Right then, a great force yanked her away, and she jolted awake.

A voice of concern came. "Becky? You were having a nightmare."

She kept her eyes closed, safe in her grandma's arms. In that dream, she had screamed Vance's name; she wasn't sure if Josette had heard it.

For four years, she had never once mentioned Vance. She had thought she had forgotten him completely.

This dream was the true ending. For the decades that followed, she never slipped into that world again.

She even moved back to Soliaridge, remained best friends with Jenny for life, and lived on without another dream of the past.

Her remaining years were healthy, happy, and full of quiet joy.

One morning when she was 80, Rebecca sunbathed on the patio of her Soliaridge home. A little girl rummaged through the jewelry box in the bedroom, then bounced out holding something she'd found.

"Grandma, there are letters carved into this. What do they say?" she said, holding up a bracelet.

Its clasp was carved with the letters: [Becky].

"Oh, that..." Rebecca squinted as faces from her youth flashed before her.

Jenny, the young Rebecca, Darren, Jethro, and Vance...

"This marks my youth," she replied, surprised, because no one else in this world could see the bracelet before.

She had almost forgotten it after so many years.

"Years from now, when you open your jewelry box and see this bracelet, you'll remember those days we shared, ght? Then no matter where T'am, I'll be happy."

You're all caught up with Five Years of Marriage to Mr. Bradford (by Koi Fish).