

Lost Me Gained Regret

#Chapter 131 - Read Lost Me Gained Regret Chapter 131

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It was Bryant!

Mark's eyes locked onto his with an intensity that was hard to ignore. One man radiated a warmth reminiscent of a sunny afternoon, while the other held the cold sharpness of a winter morning.

Their interaction instantly gave me a feeling of high tension. It was as if instead of being childhood friends, they were two people on completely opposite sides.

I racked my brain, trying to understand when the rift between ryant and Mark had grown after Mark's return from studying abroad.

Was Bryant misunderstanding my relationship with Mark? An what was Mark's reason for the tension?

Yet, it was their issue to resolve, not mine to pry into.

Bryant strode over with a commanding presence, his gaze briel., flickering over was wearing, his tone dripping with sarcasm, "Cozy, aren't you?"

the coat I

"Not as much as you two," I retorted without a second thought.

Ever since the incident yesterday, every word, every action from him seemed to erode the little affection left between us.

I couldn't help but think, had he just reached out to me, maybe I wouldn't have lost our baby. But he didn't, even though I was within arm's reach. Pretending not to hate him would only make me a hypocrite.

Bryant's gaze darkened, a storm brewing as he tried to keep his emotions in check, "Enough, let's go home."

As if tolerating my mood was a generous act on his part.

Perhaps, he still believed, like before, a simple gesture or sweet word from him, and I would come running back like a lost puppy.

So sure of himself.

So infuriatingly calm.

Yet, I was determined to shatter that belief, "Bryant, I'm not causing a scene. The only thing left between us now is a divorce paper. Just like the only thing keeping you and Margaret apart is a marriage certificate!"

His face turned to ice as he explained, "I've told you, what's between her and me isn't what you think. She's no threat to you!"

I couldn't help but laugh, "Oh? And what is it then? Just a simple brother-sister

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relationship? Hand-holding, pecking, and cuddling up? The big sister clinging onto her little brother, and the brother caring for his sister after her miscarriage?"

Bryant's face darkened like a thundercloud, his voice through gritted teeth, "Jane! When did you start having such filthy thoughts?!"

"So, what? When you two are alone, you're just playing cards? Or maybe studying some new skill?"

"Shut up!"

He grabbed my wrist, pulling me away despite the sharp pain it caused. Unaware or uncaring of the physical pain he inflicted.

I had surgery just yesterday, my abdomen still ached, and bruises covered my body. If it weren't for the urgent need to sever ties with him, coupled with my aunt's accident, I wouldn't have ventured out today.

He cherished Margaret so much, yet seemed to forget I could feel pain too.

"Bryant!" Mark stepped in, his voice low and restrained, "Easy, she's hurt."

"That's none of your concern." Bryant glared at him, his words laced with scorn, "I'm taking her home to rest properly."

Just as I was about to refuse, a nurse rushed out from the elevator, panting, "Mr. Ferguson, Ms. Ferguson says she's bleeding again, insisting on seeing you before taking any medication."

Bryant's expression turned icy, as a bitter laugh escaped me, "Go on then, weren't you taking me home? Walk away with me now, and I'll believe every word you've said."

"Figure it out! Just make sure she's alright," he snapped, perhaps genuinely concerned about my pain, his grip on me finally easing as we moved towards the exit.

I was stunned by his choice, it seemed unlike him.

But as expected, his phone began to ring relentlessly before we even left the hospital, a landline number flashing on the screen.

Bryant frowned, answering, "Yes?"

I expected a business call, but his expression softened into resignation, "Alright, stop crying. I'm coming up now."

When he stopped and turned to me, I couldn't hide the mockery on my face, or the anticipation of his departure.

He released my hand, "Wait here for a few minutes, I'll be right back."

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"Sure."

I watched him step into the elevator, turning to Mark as I wrapped my coat tighter against the chill, "Let's go, Mark."

Mark seemed surprised, "Not waiting for Bryant?"

I smiled faintly, replying, "He won't come back."

And truthfully, I had expected him to leave, challenging him on purpose.

I'd become accustomed, even numb, to such disappointments. No more waiting, not now, not ever.

As we stepped outside, the cold hit me, "Mark, I need to stop the office. You don't have to accompany me."

"It's no bother, I'm free today."

Mark chuckled, "With you looking like this, if I left you alone, Christine would have my head."

"Alright then."

On the way to Ferguson Group, I couldn't help but did the miscarriage?"

you know about Mark, kad

Aside from Christine and me, it was s supposed to be a secret.

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"Sorry, I stumbled upon it by accident."

Mark's voice was gentle as he apologized and then explained how he came to know.

It all started when Christine posted about my car accident and hospital stay on Facebook. He asked for my room number, planning to visit me today.

But when he arrived at the hospital, he happened to overhear a nurse talking about me. Not only was I injured, but I had also miscarried, and shockingly, I was discharged on the same day.

I pressed my lips together, "So, you got into a fight with him..."

"It was just a heat of the moment thing."

Mark brushed it off lightly, giving me a warm glance, "How about you? How have you been these past few days?"

"It's hard to say."

I looked down, suddenly finding the words, "I used to dream of a perfect marriage with him. Then, when I got pregnant, I couldn't wait for the baby to arrive, to become the center of my world, my only family. But now."

I gave a bitter smile, "I don't even know what's left worth holding onto."

Everything felt meaningless.

My hand instinctively touched my stomach, where no child would ever call me "Mom" again.

Mark's expression suddenly turned serious, and he pulled the car over to the side of the road, looking at me intently, "Jane, are you sick?"

I was taken aback for a moment before shaking my head, "No, just feeling a bit emotional,"

I had lost so much in just a few days. Timothy, my child, they were the most important to

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But Mark didn't seem to relax..

Once we got to the office and I came down with a storage box, he helped me put it in the backseat and handed me a fast-food combo meal.

"A quick bite on the way. I'll take you to a place, Shall we?"

"Where to?" I asked.

"You'll see," Mark's voice was clear and soothing.

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"Better apply some ointment first."

I handed him some bruise cream I had picked up from the office's medical room, pointing to his cheekbone and the corner of his mouth.

He didn't say, but I guessed his fight with Bryant was somehow because of me.

Mark smiled gratefully and began to apply the ointment in the mirror.

Once done, he carefully stored the cream back in the car.

"It's nothing."

He had helped me a lot, so this was the least I could do.

I remembered how, during my college days, fast food was my-to for venting negative emotions.

There were burgers, fried chicken, fries, but instead of soda, he got me hot chocolate. After finishing the meal and tidying up the trash, I realized we were headed towards the suburbs. The quiet of the outskirts was more calming than the city's noise.

Leaning my head against the window, I gazed out, unaware of the tears that had started to form.

I couldn't let go of the child, and what made it harder was knowing they could have been.

part of this world.

As the night deepened, we drove up a mountain road, where cars were rare.

Finally, near the summit, Mark stopped at a lookout point and said, "Wait here for a moment," before getting something from the trunk.

He came back with a long overcoat, men's size, big enough to cover me from head to toe, "It gets chilly at night, better stay warm."

Dressed and stepping out, I was greeted by a breathtaking view of the star-filled sky!

He leaned casually against the car,

"Reminds you of the starry nights when we were kids?" I thought back, e "Yes, Y haven't seen stars like

"Yes, exactly this in years since living in the city." "When I was eight, my mom passed away."

Mark looked up at the night sky, his thoughts wandering far "Aftenshe left, I'd sit in our yard waiting for her to come back, but she never did."

"Until, a little girl from next door told me that those who leave us become stars in the sky, watching over us, wanting us to be happy."

That idea felt familiar, comforting even though it was a widely known sentiment.

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Mark's eyes reflected the night sky as he looked at me, "So, Jane, you gotta keep your chin up and live your best life, remembering all the love your folks showered you with, okay?"

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"Alright... I get it now!"

Tears welled up in my eyes, and turning my head, I caught sight of a particularly bright star, feeling as if I was suddenly pulled from an overwhelming emotion that could shatter me at any moment.

Mark rea reached into his car and handed me a pack of tissues, "Go on, today, no more tears. Crying too much now will only hurt your eyes."

wit out. But after He didn't let me linger on the hill for too long before driving me back to the city.

After hesitating for a moment, I ventured to ask, "The girl you liked for so many years... she must be really special, huh?"

"Yeah," He nodded without hesitation, his gaze softening, 'The same little girl I was talking about earlier."

I was taken aback, "That's... been quite a long time."

"Yeah, twenty years," he said, clearly showing his deep, unwavering affection.

I sighed, not knowing what else to say. When we reached Christine's apartment, I softly thanked him, "Thank you for today."

Actually, when he asked me if I was sick earlier in the evening, I hesitated for a moment.

But now, I felt much better.

He raised an eyebrow, "What did I tell you?"

"Some things don't need thanks, but today, I really owe you one."

"Alright, get inside and get some rest."

"Will do. Drive safe!"

The moment I stepped out of the elevator, my phone rang. It was Bryant.

It had been hours since he said he'd only be a few minutes.

I answered, "Hello?"

"Where are you?" His voice was deep and terse. Walking to the front door, I replied nonchalantly, "At home."

"When did you learn to lie?"

His voice dripped with sarcasm, "The folks at Ferguson Mansion say you haven't been back these past few days, and it's been even longer since you moved out of Riverview Estate!"

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"Oh, if you know all that, then why bother calling? Worried I'm cheating, or that I've slept with someone else?"

This hit a nerve, his voice turning icy, "You dare?"

"Sure, I'll take my time following your footsteps," I knew exactly how to provoke him.

"Janel" Bryant exploded, his tone as cold as midwinter ice, "For the last time, where are you?"

The angrier he got, the more I reveled in it, "You're so powerful, find out yourself."

With that, I hung up!

I was done being the one revolving around him. They say the one who falls in love first loses, but once you stop loving, you can always turn the tables.

After I entered the code and came into the house, Christine rushed in from the balcony, peeling off her face mask, "Why did Mark drop you off?"

"He and Bryant got into a fight today."

I got myself a glass of water and recounted the day's events to her.

She was amazed, "Look at you, standing up to Bryant?"

"I wasn't such a pushover before, was I?"

"Well, at most you were at his beck and call," she teased.

I chose not to respond, and Christine changed the subject, "Do you think, the person Mark has liked for years could be you? He was in France on a business trip yesterday, and suddenly he's back. Suspicious, right?"

"It can't be."

I had my doubts in the car, but I've only known Mark for eight years nowhere near the timeline he mentioned with that little girl.

Besides, Mark is from the Larson family of RiverCity, and only moved here after my parents passed away.

He probably just felt sorry for me and offered a helping hand.

After my shower, Christine pointed to my phone charging on the com nightstand, "Your ex is blowing up E your phone."

I ignored it, fully dried my hair, and then the phone rang again.

"Bryant, what's wrong with you?"

"Come downstairs."

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Since our big blowup, he seems to have decided to be more of a man of few words.

I frowned. "What?"

As I said this, a chill ran down my spine. Walking to the window, I locked eyes with Bryant's gaze!

He actually looked me up??

Wait, was he crazy?

He stared at me, his voice

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I could tell he wasn't joking around.

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And the last thing I wanted was for him to disturb Christine upstairs, so I gave in, "Fine."

Before heading out, Christine did what Mark had done earlier, wrapping me in an extra-long down coat and even pulling a beanie over my head.

"Don't think I'm being over the top."

Christine tapped my forehead lightly, "Read online that cold vnds now could lead to headaches later."

"Alright, alright, you're the best."

She meant well, and after agreeing with her multiple times, I casually slipped into a pair of shoes and headed downstairs.

Seeing me emerge from the apartment building, Bryant's gaze was deep, "Why all bundled up? You sick?"

"You care?"

I realized that I had lost the ability to have a decent conversation with him.

If he truly cared, even without knowing about my pregnancy, he should have checked on me after yesterday's incident.

Regardless of the severity, I was hit by a car.

"Do you have to be so sarcastic?" he shot back.

I didn't want to get tangled in a pointless argument, so I got straight to the point, "What do you want?"

I had no interest in bickering over trivial matters in the middle of the night.

He frowned, "Why didn't you wait for me?"

I met his gaze coldly, "Why should I wait for you?"

And I was thankful that I hadn't been foolish enough to wait.

It had been five or six hours since I left the hospital.

And yet, he had the audacity to ask me why I hadn't waited for him.

As if in his mind, I should always stand where he wants me to, waiting for him to turn around.

Bryant was never known for his patience, and he scoffed, "So eager to leave with him?"

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It took me a moment to realize he meant Mark I had to admit, he was good at turning things around.

I breathed in the chilly night air, my voice detached, "Whatever you say. I'm going back up." With that, I turned to leave.

"Jane."

Suddenly, he was behind me, pulling me into his embrace, "It's my fault, don't be mad, okay?"

I was stunned to find myself in his arms, a new feeling of hel, It took a while before I could muster a response, my voice we I'm just really bummed out, you know. It's not like I'm fuming essness washing over me.

y, "Mad? Bryant, I'm not. anything."

Being angry before meant I hadn't accepted his favoritism, hadn't m accepted that I wasn't in his heart. so, every time, it was a huge blow, leaving me lost.

But not anymore, no matter what he did or chose now, it all seemed expected, and it no longer stirred anything in me.

After saying this, I tried to step away from his embrace, but he held me tight, his voice growing urgent,"

N shouldn't have been so harsh on you yesterday, and I definitely shouldn't have..."

"Hit me?" I managed a smile, though my eyes remained cold, "It's okay, was just what I needed."

It severed whatever emotional ties we had.

It shattered all the illusions I had about the boy in white from my memories.

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He seemed to understand my coldness then, suddenly looking panicked, holding me even tighter, his voice anxious, "You resent me, don't you?"

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"Absolutely." There was no hesitation in my admission.

But my resentment had nothing to do with the way v he hit me, the names he called me.

He just didn't get it, his voice heavy with regret "I'm sorry... She's been unwell, the miscarriage took a toll on her, and I acted out of desperation."

"Oh," I nodded, my smile not quite reaching my eyes. "Was it me who dragged her into the middle of the street, Bryant? It was her pulling me, right in front of your eyes. And yet, you were questioning me?"

"That's why I'm apologizing."

"So, am I just supposed to accept your apology?"

I couldn't help but laugh at the absurdity. "Her miscarriage was her own doing, her own fault! She should be thankful I haven't demanded anything from her!"

People really are biased. He grabbed the back of my head, forcing me to look him in the eye, his expression darkening, his gaze filled with a chilling intensity, "She made a mistake, true, but she's paid the price by losing a child!"

"And what about me? Was I supposed to get hit by a car?" I shot back, refusing to look away.

"You were up and about just earlier, weren't you?"

His lips curled into a cold smirk, his words dripping with sarcasm, "Even went star-gazing? How long did you and he stay up on that hill, huh? Did you have sex?"

Smack!

His last few words detonated like a bomb in my head. With strength I didn't know I had, I broke free from his grip and, for the second time since yesterday, I slapped him across the face.

"Bryant! You disgust me!"

He hissed, his voice as cold as frost, "Oh? And you two are the epitome of virtue?"

I felt a pressure building in my chest, about to explode. I shouted, each word clear and sharp, "Enough! This is where it ends! You can do whatever you want with her from now on, and it's none of your business what I do!"

I He watched me, his stance unyielding, "And what if I insist on making it my business?" I really wanted to ask if he was out of his mind, But instead, I just took a step back, utterly drained, "Bryant, for Timothy's sake, let's not

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make this any more embarrassing than it has to be."

As I turned to go upstairs, he grabbed my hand his voice deep, "You're so adamant about this divorce... Is it because of him, or something else?"

"It has nothing to do with Mark."

I really didn't want to drag Mark into this, especially considering the longstanding friendship between their families.

Seeing that I had no more to say, he held on, seemingly in need of a definitive answer.

I took a deep breath, "

It's amazing how quickly a heart can turn cold.

When I married him, I thought I'd never find myself in a "your rom or me" scenario.

But what I faced was even more melodramatic-"your first love or me".

And with the latter, it's even more devastating being the unchos mone. You can't even fell yourself any comforting lies.

Especially since his choice had cost me so dearly.

He fell silent for a moment, his defeat-palpable, but without a hint of her regret,

I stiffened, fighting back the tears.

"Bryant, I'm pregnant too."

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I almost blurted it out, but I held back at the last second. It wouldn't have made any difference anyway.

I forced a smile, "You're like a modern-day knight in shining armor. Can I ask you to do one more good deed next month?"

"What is it?" he asked.

I said quietly, "Come with me to get our divorce papers."

The grip on my arm tightened, and I could feel his fingers tren le before everything went silent between us.

After a tense moment, the elevator doors suddenly opened, rev aling a loving couple stepping out.

Bryant seemed momentarily distracted, and I took the opportunity and stepped into the elevator..

to slip my wrist away As I pressed the button to close the doors, a sense of relief washed over me for the first time in a long while.

Separation was the best option.

It was the only option.

That night, whether it was because things were finally getting resolved, or I was just exhausted, I slept until past nine the next morning.

Even Christine leaving for work didn't wake me up.

She had left a pot of oatmeal with bacon bits in the kitchen for me.

Ill ended up eating a lot, wondering why I was so hungry, when it hit me - I had miscarried.

Without the morning sickness, of course, my appetite came roaring back.

If it weren't for the reminders every time I went to the bathroom, it would feel like everything was just a distant dream.

After breakfast, I sat in the sunlight, continuing my work on the design draft for the competition.

It was nearly complete; just needed some finishing touches.

Once done, I tweaked a few details and emailed it off.

Just as I was about to stretch my stiff neck and shoulders, my phone rang.

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"Hello?" I answered, confused.

Bryant's voice was cool, "If you don't want a divorce, why keep up the act?"

"What are you talking about?" I was utterly bewildered.

"I know everything." His tone softened, "Your uncle came to see me, said you cried?"

I was instantly irritated.

I couldn't believe Allen had meddled in this!.

When I didn't respond, Bryant tried to coax me, Jane, we have 't reached a point where divorce is our only option."

I clenched my fist, asking, "Where's he now?"

"He just left."

"Got it."

"What I'm saying is-"

I hung up before he could finish.

What was even happening!

Grabbing my bag and remembering Christine's motherly advice, I also grabbed a beige wool coat.

When I got to the hospital, Aunt Cheryl wasn't there.

The room was open, reeking of cigarette smoke. Allen and Leroy were lounging around like lords, eating chips and watching soap operas.

The ashtray on the coffee table was filled with cigarette butts.

They looked anything but caregivers, having devoured all the hospital-provided nutrition meals and fruit platters.

Seeing me, Allen sat up, lazily saying, "Who taught you to visit empty-handed? Remember to bring something next time."

"Where's Auntie?" I asked, wafting away the smoke.

"Off for tests."

"Fine!"

With Aunt Cheryl gone for who knew how long I felt no reason to holdm back, I glared at him coldly, "Who E asked you to go talking to Bryant?"

"What did I say wrong?"

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He glared back, "And how are you speaking to your elders? Where's your respect?"

I didn't mince words, "My life is none of your business."

"How is it none of my business?"

Allen stood up, annoyed, "Wasn't it you crying to your aunt just com yesterday? Came pot with red eyes! If to you're too stubborn to make things right with Mr. Ferguson, I did it for you. Why can't you see that?"

I scoffed, "You're just afraid if I leave divorce him a Cero son family, you'll lose your cash cow, aren't you?"

If it weren't for Aunt Cheryl, I wouldn't have wasted another mo ent talking to him.

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But I couldn't change the fact that he was my uncle!

He could use this relationship to spout nonsense in front of Bryant!

"Jane, that's a bit cold, don't you think?"

Leroy chuckled the bag of chips onto the table, putting on a show of pretending to be att wise. "I get it, your husband had a fling, right? Saw it with my own eyes. That woman? Not even close to you in looks. Just another Instagram face. Let him have his fun, he'll get bored and come back."

Infidelity seemed like a feather's weight to these morally bank pt men.

I struggled to keep my temper in check, "Listen, I don't need yor involvement in this, got it?"

"Got it."

Allen was the poster child for how not to age gracefully, flashing his yellowed smoker's teeth in a greedy smile, "Fine, keep Mr. Ferguson out of this if you like. But if you can

cough up thirty grand a month and sort out a decent job for Leroy, I'll stay out of your hair."

"Why don't you just rob a bank?" My temper flared, "Hear me loud and clear, not a dime from me to you, ever again."

"I'm gonna sue you! I brought you up, but now you won't look after me. I'll make sure everyone knows!"

"Go ahead!" My voice rose, "I have records of every penny I've sent over the years. What about you? How much did you spend on me while I was with you? What did I ever ask from you?"

All those years, every household chore waited for me. Barely eight and struggling to mop the floor, I had to kneel and scrub again and again.

If not for my late school hours, cooking would've fallen to me too.

My aunt tried to help, only for him to rant about the pointlessness of raising a 'useless' kid, threatening to kick me out.

Even hiring a maid requires providing a living space.

His gambling addiction drained my part-time earnings several times.

And now he was talking of parental grace? Too late for that!

"You ungrateful brat!"

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Allen glared, his face, often flushed from drinking, contorted in rage, "Don't act high and mighty. I know exactly how much you'll get from divorcing Mr. Ferguson. Even a trickle from that fortune could sustain us."

"First off, I'm not getting a fortune."

I stood firm, emphasizing each word, "And even if I did, what's it to you? The law mandates support for elders, not leeches!"

"What did you say?!"

Allen's fury peaked, and he raised his hand to strike, but Leroy quickly stepped in, signaling him to calm down, "Dad!"

Then, turning to me, Leroy suggested, "How about we both give in a little? Get me a decent position at Ferguson Group, with a contract, say a hundred grand a year, and you won't have to worry about sending money home."

Their shamelessness left me speechless.

Like father, like son.

Demanding a hundred grand job with just an associate's degree, no experience, no skills.

I frowned, "A hundred grand? In your dream!"

"You..." Leroy choked on his words, and Allen, pushing him aside, gritted his teeth, "You're so stubborn, Jahe. It's obvious Mr. Ferguson still has feelings for you. Just ask him, sort out Leroy's job, and everyone's happy!"

"Forget it, it's not up for discussion."

Divorcing and still clinging to my ex-husband for favors? I couldn't do it.

Allen scoffed, threatening, "You won't go? Fine, we'll go ourselves! I refuse to believe your uncle isn't worth a job with Bryant Ferguson!"

"I'd love to see how that turn out."

A tall, commanding figure suddenly appeared at the door, his gaze sharp as a hawk's lightly resting on Allen.

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Bryant stood there, a vision in his tailored dark suit, his demeanor icy, his gaze chilling. Despite the coldness, an oppressive air of authority enveloped him, a natural-born leader through and through.

I was momentarily stunned.

Instantly, Allen's aggressive bravado deflated like a popped balloon. Gone was his earlier swagger as he rubbed his hands together, a sheepish grin spreading across his

face as he approached Bryant. Bowing and scraping, he said, "Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Ferguson, what brings you here? I was just giving this little lady a piece of my mind."

My pride felt trampled underfoot by Allen's words, Even though divorce was on the horizon, I didn't want Bryant to see me in such a disheveled state.

Or to witness such an unsavory family scene.

"Let's leave, this doesn't involve you," I urged, pushing Bryant towards the exit.

I didn't want into this mess.

Uncle meddling in my affairs, and I certainly didn't want Bryant dragged

"You scared?" Allen blocked the door, raising his voice. "Afraid your husband will find out how ungrateful you are?"

I was so frustrated I was almost speechless.

Before I could retort, he self-righteously accused, "It's not your fault for finding someone new, it's her. She's so unreasonable, so inconsiderate! With her temper, how could someone like you possibly tolerate her!"

Bryant glanced at me, his expression loaded with meaning. "Oh? She does have quite the temper, doesn't she?"

"I'm not wrong, am I?" Allen, feeling vindicated, grew even more animated. "Not to mention, she's completely ungrateful! You know, it wasn't easy for her aunt and me raising her, and now when it's her turn to take care of us, she turns her back."

"Hmm, that's not right," Bryant casually pulled up a chair and sat down, crossing his long legs, his voice very light. "You tell me, how should she take care of you? For matters like this, come to me, not her. She doesn't call the shots in our home."

I frowned.

I What did he mean by coming to him, by saying I didn't call the shots in our home?

"Really?" Allen's eyes lit up at Bryant's apparent agreement, and he launched into his demands without missing a beat. "Just cover her aunt's medical bills, give me a monthly allowance of thirty grand, and maybe sort out a job for my son. That's not too much to

ask, right?"

I felt so embarrassed I wished I could just disappear. I couldn't believe he had the audacity to ask Bryant for such things.

But what I feared most was that Bryant would agree. After all, to him, this amount of money was a drop in the bucket, a small price to pay to avoid hassle.

In a mix of anxiety and anger, I interjected, "Don't even dream about it..."

"Jane, let your uncle have a word," Bryant said, pulling on my hand and raising an eyebrow at Allen. "Anything else?" Out with Allen paused, perhaps not expecting Bryant to be so agreeable. His avarice was barely concealed as he said, "Well, it would be great if you could buy an apartment downtown, ideally with four bedrooms and two living rooms. My wife and I are getting old, and our boy is looking to get married. A downtown apartment would be convenient for everything, don't you think?"

Bryant remained noncommittal. "Makes sense," Allen, hearing those two words, looked ready to jump for joy, and even Leroy was visibly excited.

A downtown apartment with four bedrooms and two living rooms, even at its cheapest, would cost a fortune.

Such a dream was unimaginable for them before, never expecting to be handed such a windfall.

Yet, suddenly, I wasn't in a hurry to object.

This didn't seem like Bryant's usual way of playing the good guy.

Sure enough, Bryant adjusted his cufflinks, his lips parting slightly, thinking that's not enough. After all, raising someone is not less than giving life to them. It should be repaid a thousandfold, a millionfold.

Allen and Leroy exchanged glances, seeing the thrill in each other's eyes.

Bryant's lips curled into a smirk, his gaze leisurely settling on Allen. "How about this? You compile a rough list of expenses spent on Cane over the years, like tuition, pocket money, extra tutoring, clothing, food, accommodation everything counts.

For every expense on her, I'll pay back ten thousand times its value, settling it all in one go. How does that sound?"

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Hearing this, Allen's face went through a rapid palette of emotions, ending up with a shade that screamed trouble. "Well, well... we're all family here, right?" he stammered, "No need to keep tabs like this."

Bryant, cool as a cucumber, laid on the charm thick, "Oh, but there is, Uncle. Gratitude is owed where gratitude is due. Don't be shy about asking for it. Setting aside the financial help she's given over the years, raising her must have cost a pretty penny, at least ten grand, right? So, I figure I owe you a hundred million."

"The thing is... the thing is..."

Allen's face was a live show of colors, finally settling on a deep red. "Seriously, after all these years, how could I possibly keep track of all this?"

"No trouble at all. Which bank are you with? I'll make a call, and we'll have it sorted in minutes," Bryant said, pretending to reach for his phone.

Allen, terrified, practically lunged at Bryant, pleading. "Mr. Ferguson, no need to check, really!"

He was petrified Bryant would uncover the truth about how he had almost maltreated me and cause him trouble. His guilt was written all over his face.

"What's wrong?"

Bryant furrowed his brows, feigning confusion "I thought Jane was being ungrateful? Now that we want to repay you generously, you're turning us down?"

Allen was still thick-skinned enough to say, "Who needs a hundred million? If you really want to give something, a million and a half will cover it."

"Huh." Bryant let out a scoff, "Uncle, I've been around the block a few times in the business world, and I don't like unclear deals. You want money, fine, but bring me the receipts."

He straightened his tie with a deliberate slowness, "Or are you saying, you've just been 'taking care of her without actually spending a dime?"

"How could that be...?"

Allen was on the verge of jumping out of his skin but was too afraid of Bryant to raise his voice, "If I hadn't spent money on her, how could she have grown up so well?"

"Why couldn't she?"

A frail yet firm female voice came from the doorway. Aunt Cheryl, supported by a nurse, entered, "Did you ever spend money on Jane? She went to public school, came home to chores, and started part-time jobs in middle school! And you, how much do you owe her that you're well aware of?"

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Chapter 130

Bryant's expression darkened, a flicker of sympathy crossing his face, his brows knitting together.

I looked away, telling myself it was just an illusion.

Allen shot back, "I raised her, and now I owe her?"

"Her parents left her half a million, what did you do with it? Haven't forgotten, have you?" Allen, after a moment's thought, retorted angrily, "Why bring up something from so long ago?"

I was taken aback. Aunt Cheryl looked at me, Her eyes filled with shame and remorse, "Your parents must have foreseen the company's crisis and let that half a million with me, in case something happened, to take care of you. But he gambled it all away... I've been too ashamed to mention it."

Tears welled up in my eyes.

I clenched my fists, holding back sobs, and shook my head, "It's okay, you're not to blame. Mom and Dad... they wouldn't blame you either"

Some things were beyond her control.

"Why are you even saying this now, are you stupid?!"

Allen, unable to vent his anger on Bryant, turned it towards Aunt Cheryl. Seeing the money slipping through his fingers, he was about to leap from the ground and slap her!

I instinctively stepped in front of her, and just as his hand was about to hit me, I grabbed Allen's arm with a swift motion!

Bryant's grip was iron, his eyes cold as ice, "Touch her and see what happens."

10:03

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Chapter 140

et it carried a chill that could make one's blood run cold.

His voice was calm, yet It seemed, if Allen dared, he would crush Allen's hand without hesitation.

This was perhaps the first time I truly felt what it was like to be protected by him.

But, it felt too late, leaving no ripples in my heart.

Allen moved slightly, realizing that he, a burly man, couldn't budge in Bryant's grip. He shivered and quickly explained.

"Mr. Ferguson, it was an accident, I swear!"

Aunt Cheryl looked scared by the confrontation. "Jane..."

I wanted to teach Allen a lesson, but with my aunt looking so frail, it didn't seem right.

I could only tug at Bryant's arm. "Let it go, release him."

Bryant, still seething, wasn't easily persuaded. His gaze fixed on Allen, "Touch her again, and I'll chop off your hands, got it?"

"Yes, yes! I wouldn't dare... You have my word!"

Allen's face turned pale as he hastily assured.

Only then did Bryant release him, and I turned to Allen wearily, "I've paid Auntie's medical bills. As for anything else, drop it."

"You..."

Allen was clearly unhappy, but confronted with Bryant's menacing look, he remained silent.

Then, I helped Aunt Cheryl into her room, and couldn't help but ask, "Has... has Uncle ever hit you over these years?"

She sat on the bed, her head down, pondering for a while before managing a comforting smile. "No, dear, he was just angry. He's never laid a hand on me, don't worry."

"Okay..."

I couldn't probe further. After ensuring she was comfortable and her illness was taken care of, I stood to leave.

In the living room, only Allen and Leroy remained.

Their earlier bravado gone. Seeing me, Allen immediately tried to curry favor. "Jane, could you please speak to Mr. Ferguson for me? Make sure he understands I wasn't trying to hit you. When has Uncle ever raised a hand to you?"

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I pursed my lips, gently reminding him, "It's not okay to hit anyone."

"Alright, alright, I won't hit her again, happy? Just please, talk to him for me," Allen pleaded. "It's your fault! Mr. Ferguson looked so upset, How am I supposed to get into the Ferguson Group now?" Leroy complained.

Allen, furious, slapped Leroy on the back of his head. "Ingrate! Who was I doing this for?!"

I didn't want to listen to their quarrel and walked straight out of the room.

I thought Bryant had left, but found him standing not far from the door. Seeing me, he strode over.

"I'll drive you home."

"No need." I refused, then calmly said, "Bryant, how you get it? He only said those things 'cause he was scared that without you, they'd be out of cash."

"Why haven't you ever mentioned these things to me before?"

"Mention what? There's nothing to say."

I walked towards the elevator.

Bryant followed slowly, his expression unreadable. "You never told me you had such a hard time growing up."

"That wasn't hard."

The real hardship was after my parents died and before Aunt Cheryl came for me.

But over many nights, I'd come to understand. Perhaps everyone's life has its dark moments.

I glanced at Bryant under the setting sun, thinking I no longer cared, yet I felt a hint of bitterness. "Besides, you never gave me a chance to speak about it, did you?"

10:03