

# **Lost Me, Gained Regret (Jane and Bryant Ferguson)**

## **Chapter 181**

I couldn't give him the answer he wanted. After all, I remembered that girl had tied the knot.

I restarted the car, a slight smile curling my lips. "Good luck with that."

"Thanks," Mark replied cheerfully.

I drove him home, hesitating before speaking, "Your injury..."

"Don't mind what Kathy's been spreading around." He took the medicine from me, effortlessly easing the awkwardness. "Steven's at my place. He'll patch me up."

"Okay." I felt a weight lift off my shoulders.

It was not that I didn't want to help him with his wound, but considering it was on his back, it would inevitably mean taking off his shirt. Given our relationship, it might not be entirely appropriate. He'd probably feel uncomfortable, too.

Mark suddenly looked at me as I was about to return the car keys. "Were you scared by what you'd seen today?"

I clenched my palm. Seeing Violet lash out at Mark like that did frighten me. The whip cut deep.

But at that moment, I shook my head. "I've seen worse."

"That's good." He didn't take the keys., "It's the weekend. Taxis are hard to come by around here. Take the car. I've got another one."

Without making a fuss, after Mark stepped out, I texted Steven some wound care tips after Mark left and then quietly drove off.

The fingerprint analysis that Gary had sent over was on the entryway table at Riverview Estate. I had given them the code to my place.

A quick look at the report calmed me down. It confirmed that the fingerprints were indeed Margaret's.

After a shower and changing my clothes, I felt refreshed and headed to the hospital.

Arriving there, Bryant looked up. "What took you so long?"

"Just got held up," I replied.

We were on the verge of divorce. There was no need to explain everything. I waved the document folder. "But I brought the surprise you were waiting for." "What is it?" Bryant raised an eyebrow, curious.

I handed it over. "You'll see."

He'd understand how his grandfather had died once he looked into it a bit more. It was the person he kept protecting who had betrayed his closest kin.

He took it with one hand, his long fingers untangling the string of the envelope. As he was about to pull out the documents, Bryant's phone rang. It was Margaret.

He frowned but rejected the call. As he started to extract the papers, Kevin's phone went off.

Bryant could afford to reject the call, but Kevin couldn't. He was responsible for Margaret's travel arrangements.

Kevin answered, and whatever was said made him reply solemnly, "I'll let Mr. Ferguson know right away."

That sentence alone was enough to send a bad feeling through me. And those feelings were usually spot-on!

The next moment, Kevin ended the call, looked at Bryant, and reported, "Mr. Ferguson, Ms. Ferguson called. Teresa's awake." Hearing it, I froze!

Bryant was initially stunned and quickly composed himself. "Really?"

Kevin nodded. "It doesn't seem like a bluff this time."

It seemed it wasn't their first time using this trick on Bryant.

Bryant put the documents aside and stood up eagerly, turning to me, "Teresa's awake. Do you want to come see?"

"Yes!" I agreed without hesitation. At least, I needed to see if it was a wake-up or another ruse.

Margaret greeted us at the door, clad in a winter dress. Her face lit up at the sight of Bryant, sweeping a colder glance my way as she did. "Bry, you got here quick." "Yeah, Jane and I wanted to see Teresa. Is now a good time?" Bryant asked smoothly.

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Margaret glanced at me, her expression a mix of resignation and urgency. "It would be a good time. My mom has been looking forward to seeing you. However, it's probably best if Jane stays out for now. The doctor mentioned that my mom's been out for a long time, and her memory's messy. It's best if she only sees familiar faces at first to avoid any undue stress on her recovery."

Her words made it sound like my stepping in there would be akin to committing a cardinal sin.

I wasn't going to push it.

I turned to Bryant, saying, "You go ahead. I'll make my exit."

"If that's how it is," Bryant said, his tone cold as he shot Margaret a look. He wrapped an arm around my shoulder. "Then we'll give Teresa a few days to recuperate before we drop by again."

Surprised, I glanced at him, tempted to shrug off his arm, but he seemed oblivious to my discomfort, unmoving.

"Bry..." Margaret's face flushed with embarrassment and frustration, her eyes welling up. "You had me leave yesterday, and now, at a time like this, you still..."

"Margaret, enough." A frail voice echoed from the room, "Let Bry and Ms. Webster in."

With no other choice, Margaret unwillingly stepped aside. "Come in, then."

Despite her years-long coma, Teresa looked relatively well, thanks to top-notch medical care.

Upon seeing Bryant, she clasped his hand, tears streaming down her face.

I might have been moved to tears by the display of maternal affection if I hadn't known the truth.

"I'm just glad you're okay. If you're safe, then all these years were worth it.

"Bry, I heard from Margaret about your marriage. Timothy wouldn't let you marry Margaret.

"Oh, look at me, dredging up the past. Ms. Webster, please don't mind me. They were so close back then. It's just a shame. That is all."

I couldn't help but smirk, "Why would I mind? Thanks to your daughter, Bryant and I are on the verge of divorce."

Margaret must have filled her in before our arrival.

Yet, Teresa's response was an award-worthy performance of shock, anger, and apologetic glances., "Ms. Webster, please don't hold it against Margaret. She's a bit immature, stubbornly sticking to what she believes in. And Bry, well, he's always indulged her..."

The whole act was rich with layers. But through it all, Teresa never admitted Margaret was in the wrong.

I replied with a light-hearted tone, "Well, temperament can be hereditary. I wonder if your daughter's relentless nature comes from you?"

To secure her place in the Ferguson family, she didn't hesitate to push a pregnant woman down the stairs. Margaret's tactics were as ruthless, if not more, than hers.

After hearing my words, Teresa's expression darkened with a mix of hurt and confusion in her eyes, "Ms. Webster, have you misunderstood something?"

She then turned to Bryant, pleading, "Bry, did I say something wrong? Please explain this to Ms. Webster. I've been out of it for so long. I hope she won't take it to heart if I've spoken out of turn."

Thinking I was venting my frustration about Margaret causing my miscarriage, Bryant gave me a look, softly saying, "Teresa wasn't aware of those issues. Don't take it out on her." Teresa was puzzled. "What issues?"

She then earnestly added, "Whatever the case, I hope you can look past it for my daughter's sake. She's all I have."

"Mom!" Margaret seemed genuinely aggrieved, "They're planning to send me away!"

Teresa's shock turned to Bryant. "Bry, you can't seriously be considering sending Margaret to..."

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Bryant gave me a dark look, hoping I'd step back from the edge.

I couldn't help but smile, taking the lead with firm resolve. "She's telling the truth. She'll be gone by tomorrow night at the latest."

"I won't listen to you..." Teresa ignored my words, her eyes locked on Bryant, looking like she could barely handle the truth. "Bry, tell me. Is it true?"

Perhaps my gaze was too intense, but despite his discomfort, Bryant's voice was calm and steady as he spoke. "Yes, it's true."

"Mom, did you hear that?" Margaret was on the verge of tears. "Bry promised you he'd look out for me, but now, he's turning his back on us to side with an outsider."

Bryant's expression turned cold. "Jane is my wife, not an outsider!"

"You're divorced!" Margaret's face was streaked with tears, her words emphatic, as if she was the one who had been wronged.

Bryant frowned, displeased. "Until the divorce papers are signed, Jane remains my wife."

I was surprised that Bryant emphasized our relationship with Margaret like that.

"Enough," Teresa interrupted their argument, her sickly face showing a hint of pleading. "Bry, whatever your and Ms. Webster's relationship is, Margaret is still your family, right? She's been doted on by our family since she was young. Sending her abroad alone is like sending her to her doom."

"I only have one daughter. If something happens to her, how am I supposed to live..."

Teresa was close to tears.

I was frustrated, only to hear Bryant hesitantly relent. "I'll discuss it again with Jane."

"Discuss what?" I stared at him, unwilling to compromise again! I didn't want to give in this time.

I spoke stubbornly, "Bryant, you just promised me this yesterday."

Does he just change his mind like that? He's always breaking his promises.

Bryant pinched his nose, trying to pull me aside, but I shook off his hand, refusing to back down. "If you have something to say, say it here."

"Do you have to make things so hard?" Bryant's face got all serious.

I didn't buy his words, scoffing, "For instance? You wouldn't send her to prison, would you?"

Teresa looked at me. "Prison? What has Margaret done that you want to send her to prison?"

She sounded as if I was completely unreasonable.

"She killed my child!" I declared coldly, a bitter smile on my lips. "But to you, that probably doesn't seem like a big deal, right?"

After all, the one Teresa killed was Bryant's mother, a living, breathing pregnant woman.

Teresa helplessly spoke, "Ms. Webster, is there a misunderstanding between us? Why are you so hostile toward me?"

"Exactly! Jane, my mom just woke up, don't upset her! And about killing your child, I've said it before. I didn't do it on purpose. I didn't know you were pregnant. Why won't you believe me?" Margaret was evasive.

I had no interest in arguing with Margaret, just fixing my gaze on Bryant. "Have you decided? Are you going to send her abroad or not..." Before I could finish, Teresa suddenly clutched her chest, her breathing becoming rapid, looking like she might faint at any moment.

"We won't send Margaret abroad!" Bryant panicked, dropping the sentence before rushing out to call a doctor.

The intent in his tone was evident. And it was directed at me.

Bitterness churned within me, forcing a smile as I turned to leave, only to hear Teresa speak. "Ms. Webster, since you've filed the divorce with Bryant, don't waste each other's time. Once the cooling-off period is over, finalize it."

I turned back, stunned by her calm facade, and couldn't help but mock. "Even after all these years in a coma, your acting hasn't gone rusty."

Not only did Bryant believe it, but I did, too.

"Did you hear what I just said?" Teresa narrowed her eyes, pressing forward.

I refused to give her the satisfaction, a smirk on my lips. "Are you trying to force a divorce, Teresa? I'm not one to play nice for the sake of appearances. Push me too far, and I might not divorce, making your daughter the eternal homewrecker!"

Teresa glared at me furiously. "No surprise Margaret called you tough to deal with! You've got no shame!"

"Who lacks shame is for us to know," I grinned. "I never thought being the other woman could be a hereditary trait."

"You!" Teresa's jaw clenched so tight that she might've cracked a tooth, and then, a second later, she clutched at her chest again.

I frowned, turning back to see Bryant leading several doctors in.

Indeed, she was a drama queen.

The doctors crowded around the bed, checking on Teresa.

I watched Bryant coldly. "Were you serious about what you just said?"

Bryant massaged his temples, exasperated. "Jane, I'll explain everything to you."

"Explain what?" I laughed.

How could I expect Bryant to make things right for me if he couldn't even send Margaret away? And my child would fade away into nothing while the one responsible lived a life of glory, possibly even marrying his father. The thought was ridiculously bitter.

Bryant helplessly conceded, "Anything but sending her away or jail, I'm open to."

"And what if I said," I took a deep breath, looking at him with utter disappointment, "that Margaret's actions also led to Timothy's death? She killed our child and then Timothy!"

I was nearly screaming, my emotions spiraling out of control. "Those two women killed your family!"

## **Chapter 184**

Bryant's mom, grandpa, and his kid were all gone because of them.

"Jane! What kind of nonsense are you spouting?" Margaret stormed over, shoving me as she fiercely warned, "I could sue you for defamation, you know?"

Teresa, who seemed less hostile, looked over with confusion. "Ms. Webster, what do you mean by those two women?"

"What do I mean? You don't get it?" Under Bryant's icy glare, I spelled it out slowly for Teresa. "Years ago, in your quest to marry into the Ferguson family, you pushed Bryant's mother, who was pregnant for nine months, down the stairs. Have you forgotten?"

"Accusations require evidence!" Teresa's voice rose and fell dramatically, obviously furious at my allegations.

As Timothy said, Teresa thought destroying the surveillance footage meant leaving no trace.

Reminded by Teresa's words, Margaret also focused on the point. "Yeah, Jane, you can't just convict someone without proof."

"Evidence, you say," I called Kevin, asking him to bring over the document I had prepared for Bryant.

He was quick, arriving soon after with the documents, and I promptly pulled out the fingerprint analysis report, handing it to Bryant. "Take a look. It ties Margaret to your grandpa's death."

Margaret tensed up, about to snatch the report, but Teresa stopped her with a look.

The old were indeed wiser. If she didn't grab the report, she could deny stuff, but taking it would look like she's guilty.

As Bryant examined the report, his gaze sharpened horrifyingly at the sight of the fingerprint match. "Why are your fingerprints on Grandpa's medication?"

"My... my fingerprints..." Margaret looked confused, though tightly clenching her hands behind her.

Teresa softly suggested, "Margaret, think about it. Maybe you were trying to medicate Timothy right before he fainted?"

"That's right..." Margaret's eyes brightened as she seemingly remembered, turning to Bryant with guilt. "That day, Timothy had an attack, and I was in such a hurry to give him his medicine. I couldn't find it for the longest time, and when I did, he had passed out. That must be why my prints were on the pill."

I was appalled at her ability to fabricate stories. "When I visited you in the hospital that day, you told me you didn't know where Timothy's medicine was! Your story doesn't add up."

Only those with something to hide resorted to lies.



"When did I say that, Jane? What have I done to you? Now, to kick me out of the country, you're fabricating all sorts of lies!" Margaret looked helplessly at Bryant. "Bry, I didn't do it. You know me. I feel terrible even stepping on an ant. How could I possibly harm Timothy?"

I felt sick and looked at Bryant, asking, "You buying her story?"

At this point, what Margaret said didn't matter. The only thing that mattered was who Bryant believed.

Bryant looked at me, his gaze deep and absorbing. "Is it true what you said about Teresa pushing my mother?"

Feigning outrage, Teresa demanded, "Ms. Webster, I've always treated Bry as my own. If you're going to drive a wedge between us, you better have proof!"

I smirked. "You sure you want it?"

"Absolutely!" Teresa didn't seem afraid in the slightest.

I pulled out my phone, dialing the Ferguson Mansion. A servant answered. "Is Gary home?"

"Mrs. Ferguson, Gary left half an hour ago and hasn't returned," the servant replied.

"Okay, I'll call his cell then."

I dialed Gary's number next. Aside from Timothy and me, Gary was the only person who knew about that. The evidence was in Timothy's study, in a safe that only Gary knew the combination. I needed to find him.

Teresa smiled smugly. "Ms. Webster, I've been part of the Ferguson family for years, raising Bry. Without evidence, I doubt Bry would just let this go."

"I think she's just bluffing!" Margaret said confidently, unaware of her mother's deeds or for some other reason.

I didn't bother explaining, just waiting for Gary to pick up his phone. But the call went unanswered, the ringtone playing through without a response.

Frowning, I was about to try again when Bryant stopped me, offering his phone. "Try mine. Gary's might be on silent, but he has set to receive calls from me and Grandpa."

"Okay." Relieved, the call connected almost immediately this time. "Mr. Ferguson."

"Gary, it's me," I said.

"Mrs. Ferguson? Did you get the fingerprint report?" Gary asked respectfully.

"I did." I cut straight to the chase. "Gary, Teresa's awake, and I'm in her hospital room now. I need you to testify about something Timothy told me when you were there."

Gary hesitated before asking, "What's it about?"

"I'll put you on speaker so Bryant can hear and believe." Switching to speakerphone, I asked, "Teresa has orchestrated the death of Bryant's mother, right? She destroyed the surveillance and pushed Bryant's mom down the stairs."

## Chapter 185

The day Timothy passed, he mentioned that Bryant would figure out the truth sooner or later. They couldn't keep it from him forever. It was better Bryant knew now than later to save him from being deceived by that mother and daughter.

But what caught me off guard was Gary on the other end of the phone, sounding genuinely puzzled. "Mrs. Ferguson, where did you hear about that?"

My vision nearly blacked out, anticipating Bryant's icy stare!

"Grandpa told me," I said.

I even began to doubt myself, wondering if I got it all wrong. But no, I hadn't.

I tried to remind him, "Gary, don't you remember? It was in Timothy's study, he even had..."

"You must be mistaken." Gary cut me off so abruptly!

I was stunned, disbelief evident in my voice, "How could I possibly get this wrong?"

"Jane!" Margaret, somewhat nervous, suddenly scoffed, "You wouldn't be trying to bribe Gary into vouching for you, would you? Sadly, he was Timothy's most trusted man and would never stoop to your level! Give it up!"

"Gary..." I couldn't help but try to confirm with Gary again, but before I could, Bryant snatched the phone from me, his expression dark as he stepped outside to talk to Gary.

When he returned, the storm brewing in his eyes felt like it could engulf me. His voice was cold, "Have you got anything else to say?"

"Bry..." Teresa's face was all about patience and tolerance. "Ms. Webster must be unhappy about your favoritism toward Margaret, fabricating these stories to drive a wedge between you and us. It's understandable. Don't be too upset..."

Looking at Teresa's composed demeanor, I realized I had fallen into a trap. I had messed up at the worst possible moment.

Clutching my hands, I only looked at Bryant. "Believe it or not, what I said was true."

"Enough!" Bryant's shout cut through the tension, "Isn't this enough drama for you?"

He seemed more inclined to believe I was someone who made false accusations rather than trust my words.

A bitter smile crossed my lips. "So, you don't trust me at all. Is that it?"

"I feel so sick..." Suddenly, Teresa started gasping for breath and fainted the next second.

Margaret's performance was even more convincing, immediately bursting into tears. "Bry, are you going to let Jane upset my mother to death?"

Bryant's eyes were icy as he looked at me, his voice serious as he said, "Get out!"

His gaze was sharp, stabbing right through my heart.

I froze, finally realizing he wasn't yelling at someone else. He was yelling at me.

Right. Compared to Teresa, who had been in a vegetative state for years because of him, what was I?

I walked out of the hospital, tearing up the document envelope I was holding into pieces. Bryant didn't believe it, not a thing. What was the point of gathering any more evidence? What surprised me even more was Gary changing his story.

I drove home, my mind in chaos, only to find a Bentley parked not far away. It was Timothy's favorite car.

As I got off, I saw Gary stepping out of the Bentley, looking at me with guilt. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Ferguson, about the phone earlier. I had no choice."

"Why?" I was too tired to be angry. I just wanted to know why.

Gary looked somber. "I just visited Mr. Bryant's private psychologist. He mentioned that Bryant has started up with his therapy sessions again recently." "Recently?" I was stunned, and Gary continued, "Yes. After he found out about your miscarriage."

## Chapter 186

I couldn't quite figure out if Bryant was despicable or just pitiful. "So, you're worried that the truth about his mother's death might set him off again?"

"Yeah." Gary nodded, "The psychiatrist suggested we take it slow and wait until Mr. Bryant's feeling a bit better."

"Okay." My response was flat, devoid of any emotion.

I'd rather not deal with the Ferguson family's drama anymore if it weren't for Timothy's dying wish. But then, getting home and thinking about Bryant's plight stirred a faint sense of pity in me. That quickly evaporated, however, the moment I remembered how he yelled at me in the hospital room. That scant pity vanished without a trace.

I suddenly found myself loathing my inability to be more decisive, hating that I couldn't plan things better.

While I was lying on the couch, zoning out in sheer boredom, Christine suddenly popped by.

I opened the door. "Why didn't you just use your fingerprint to come in?"

"Didn't want to walk in on something I shouldn't see." Christine sauntered in, her hips swaying, kicked off her heels, and slipped into her house slippers, glancing at me. "Why the long face?"

"Thought I was striking the snake at its head today." I tossed her a juice before sinking back into the couch, laughing at myself. "It turned out that I just startled the snake instead."

"You're quite the poet today." Christine unscrewed the bottle, moving closer with a smirk, "Too bad I'm lost. Can you spell it out for me?"

"Margaret's mother, Teresa, woke up today." I sighed, "I had the evidence that Teresa was behind Bryant's mother's death and was ready to have Margaret shipped off."

"But alas, no dice." I shared the whole story with Christine in brief.

"Great, the little bitch stays, and now, we've got an old one." Christine rolled her eyes and sipped her juice. "But Bryant not trusting you? Not surprised."

I was curious. "Why not?"

"When has he ever trusted you?"

Christine's rhetorical question left me speechless. It seemed he never really did. I chose to stay quiet, and after a while, I finally noticed that Christine wasn't in her usual spirits, either.

Usually, she'd have gone on a rant about Margaret's family tree by then. But today, she was oddly subdued.

I stood up to look at her and saw her eyes were all red. "What's up? You look like you're gonna burst into tears."

She didn't hide anything, admitting, "Steven's getting engaged."

"To some heiress." Christine lay back, letting tears fall freely. "Jane, I don't want to love him anymore, and I hate that I ever did. He told me he could still play around even after he's married. To think he saw me as a mistress is laughable."

After hearing that, my heart clenched, and I handed her a tissue to wipe away Christine's tears. "Right, we're over him. My Chris is too beautiful and smart to waste herself on one guy."

"Yeah!" Christine nodded vigorously, wiping her tears haphazardly, and perked up, "Jane, let's go have a drink, yeah?"

"Sure." I had nothing better to do anyway.

Christine drove us to a bar she frequented, the early evening lights casting a warm glow on the chilly early winter streets.

"Stop the car!" I suddenly spoke as we neared the bar, passing a five-star hotel.

Christine slowed down, pulling over. "What's up?"

"Those two..." I stared at a man and a woman who had been cozy at the hotel entrance and were walking inside arm in arm. "They look like Albert and Margaret!"

## Chapter 187

"Seriously, they do look like them!" I remarked, pointing out the similarity.

Following my gaze, Christine burst into excitement, "Let's hurry!"

She unbuckled her seat belt and dashed out of the car. I quickly followed, and we both raced into the hotel lobby. But they were nowhere to be seen.

Left with no other option, we approached the hotel reception. With a charming smile and a gentle voice, Christine inquired, "Hey there, about the couple that just walked in, is there a big age difference between them?"

Her beauty and friendly demeanor made it easy for people to lower their guard.

One of the younger receptionists almost spilled the beans. "Seems like quite a bit..."

"What's quite a bit? Maybe you don't want your job anymore." An experienced receptionist quickly cut her off, "Sorry, but we cannot disclose any information about our guests."

"That old man might be my dad!" Christine quickly concocted a story, tears welling in her eyes. "My mom stood by him through thick and thin, and now that he's made some money, he's off keeping a young thing behind her back!"

I was astonished at Christine's ability to weave such a tale on the spot. The younger receptionist, moved by anger, exclaimed, "Ah! That's so wrong! What a sleazebag!"

Realizing the need to switch tactics, Christine turned to the other receptionist, pleading, "Please, just tell me. Were the man and woman who just walked in named Albert Ferguson and Margaret?" "No." When hearing the names, the receptionist promptly responded, "You can relax now. You must have mistaken it."

It didn't seem like a lie.

Christine glanced at me, and I shook my head, saying, "We couldn't have been mistaken."

Although not the same as the one she had worn at the hospital earlier, Margaret's outfit was still familiar. And the eternal fashion sense of Albert was unmistakable.

We could hardly be wrong about both of them.

Christine reached for her phone, likely with the intent to report them, but I stopped her. "It's pointless. Reporting them for solicitation won't prove anything. Even if the police found them in the same room, it wouldn't prove anything."

They were officially father and daughter. Given Albert's affection for Margaret, they could readily concoct any excuse to clear their names and even turn the tables on us

unless they got caught in bed. Once in the car, I dialed Kevin's number, and he answered promptly, "Mrs. Ferguson."

I asked, "Kevin, are you at the hospital? Can you check if Margaret is there?"

"She's not." Kevin's response was swift. "She left about an hour ago. Is everything okay?"

"It's fine, thanks." Hanging up the phone, I was even more convinced. "We weren't mistaken. That was Margaret and Albert."

Christine pondered. "So... do we wait here for them to come out?"

"No need." I immediately dismissed the idea. "Let's go have a drink instead."

"Why?"

"They didn't even use their real identities to check in." Glancing at the time, I added, "It's about to be party time, and this is a fancy hotel. They're likely to run into someone they know and won't risk coming out together like they did before."

I had to admit they were cautious. No wonder their deep connection had remained undiscovered.

Understanding the situation better, Christine started the car with a sense of mischief. "I knew it! When I saw them at the mall last time, I felt something was off. Since when do a man and his stepdaughter get that close? Turns out they are playing a whole different family drama."

## Chapter 188

"Seriously, after all the drama, it turns out Bryant's just looking out for his stepmom number two?"

"Compared to him," I pursed my lips, "I'm more curious about how Teresa would react if she found out the truth."

There she was at the hospital today, fiercely defending Margaret. I couldn't imagine her finding out that her beloved daughter, Margaret, had sneaked into her husband's bed while she was out cold in the hospital bed all these years. The showdown between mother and daughter would be quite the spectacle.

Christine glanced at me. "What are you thinking? You seem like you're up to no good."

I smirked, "Just wondering when we'll catch them making love."

Christine raised an eyebrow. "Didn't peg you as someone who liked drama, Jane."

"Out of necessity."

I thought, 'Margaret, I'll nail it this time.'

The bar was coming to life, with loud music assaulting our eardrums and couples gyrating on the dance floor, stepping into a world of weird wonders.

We were about to book a private booth as usual when Christine tugged at my sleeve. "Let's sit outside. It's livelier."

"Sure." I knew she had grown accustomed to hanging out with Steven and his lively friends over these years.

We found ourselves a booth and settled in, Christine curling up on the leather sofa, pouring us a drink.

Out of nowhere, Christine started, "Jane, when you and Bryant filed for divorce, how did you feel?"

I was stunned, my fingers tightening around the glass. "A mix of sadness and relief."

I'd got complicated feelings.

Christine's eyes met mine as she sipped her drink. "Which was it more, sadness or relief?"

I had to admit that her question hit me hard. I could lie to anyone else that it was more of a relief. But it was Christine asking. I downed my drink and confessed, "Back then, it was more sadness."

I was upset that the person I'd loved so long had always chosen someone else. I was even more upset that he always said Margaret wouldn't affect our relationship, yet our marriage ended because of her. I would've preferred a blatant betrayal. That way, relief would've outweighed the sadness.

Christine probed, "And now?"

"I'm getting better." I smiled, refilling my glass, "I'm learning to stop loving him."

Once I completely stopped, there wouldn't be any sadness or relief.



I could tell Christine was still feeling down, understanding how hard it was to move on from a relationship, so I offered. "Do you know what the most stable relationship between people is?" Curiously, she asked, "What?"

I answered, "Having no relationship at all."

Suddenly, a large hand landed on my shoulder from behind, a deep voice inquiring, "What's this about having no relationship?"

## Chapter 189

When I turned, I saw glistening eyes that surprised me, causing my hand to flutter to my chest. "Mark, you scared me!"

"Sorry about that," he said with a smile that could light up the darkest room. "Wasn't trying to eavesdrop. Just happened to walk by."

I waved it off with an easy laugh. "Here to socialize or hang out with friends?"

"Friends," Mark replied, his voice soft. When he glanced toward Christine, there was a hint of resignation in his eyes. It didn't take me long to catch on who he was referring to.

Catching the drift, Christine interrupted, "You two chat. I'm off to dance."

She entered the bar and shed her coat, revealing a sleek black silk slip dress that flattered her elegant collarbones. She was turning heads the moment she hit the dance floor. And boy, did she know how to capture an audience with her moves.

I settled down with Mark, curiosity getting the better of me. "How's your injury? You're not supposed to drink, right?"

"It's nothing serious. Looks worse than it is," Mark shrugged. "I'm not drinking. Just drowning Steven's sorrows for him."

Glancing at Christine, who was the life of the dance floor then, I couldn't help but chuckle. "Seems like we're all escaping in our ways."

Our conversation was abruptly interrupted by a commotion coming from the direction of the dance floor. A fight had broken out!

Mark and I turned to see what was happening, and to our shock, it was Steven.

He was visibly drunk, pinning another man down and landing punch after punch, all the while shouting at Christine, "What the hell do you think you're doing touching her? Who the hell do you think you are to touch her?"

"Steven, are you out of your mind?" Christine was livid, pulling him up forcefully. "What's it to you who I dance with?"

Caught off guard by her question, Steven retorted defiantly, "You just can't!"

With a scoff, Christine shot back. "Since when do you get a say in who I dance with?"

Christine stormed off in our direction, leaving Steven to follow her in a few hurried steps, grabbing her arm with no intention of reason. "How do I not get a say? Several days ago, we were in bed together, doing everything a couple does. And now, I don't even have the right to speak?"

"Rest assured," Christine replied with disdain. "It won't be long before I'm in bed with someone else, doing everything we did. Everything!"

I knew her well. Despite her bold words, she hadn't been with anyone before Steven. It was merely a threat.

But Steven didn't understand. In the heat of the moment, the tall man burst into tears, clinging to Christine. "I won't allow it! Chris, you can only be with me. Please..."

"And what about you?" Christine asked, her gaze piercing. "Steven, can you promise to stay faithful to me while you're married to another woman?"

"I can! I swear I won't touch her!" Steven vowed dramatically, tears streaming down his face.

"Poor girl, marrying into such a mess," Christine muttered, pushing him away in frustration. Seeing his tears, she covered her face in exasperation. "A grown man crying in public. Aren't you ashamed?" Steven argued, "I'm crying for the woman I love. What's shameful about that?"

"You're insane!"

Despite Steven's lack of shame, Christine could no longer stand it. She grabbed her coat and stormed out, with Steven chasing after her, determined as ever.

I made a move to follow, but Mark gently stopped me. "Let them sort it out. Steven won't take advantage of the situation. You can trust that."

"Okay then." I agreed.

After all, love and relationships weren't something outsiders could easily meddle in.

Ever the gentleman, Mark picked up my jacket and draped it over my shoulders. "Shall I take you home?"

I smiled. "That'd be great."

As Christine was gone, there really isn't much reason for me to stay.

## Chapter 190

On the way, Mark gripped the steering wheel, glancing over at me, "Still worried about Christine?"

"Not really." I shook my head. "She can handle her stuff."

Christine always had a way of weighing things out in her mind. I believed she knew when to step back.

"Right." Mark responded softly, "So, what about the offer? Have you given it any thought?"

"Mark, I appreciate your offer." After expressing my gratitude, I explained, "I can't make it for now. Too much has been going on lately. I need some time to process."

I needed to sort things out calmly and then focus wholeheartedly on work.

Mark didn't seem to mind but chuckled, "Guess we won't even be colleagues for a day."

"Huh?" I was puzzled.

Mark's eyes deepened, and his lips parted slightly with a hint of warmth, hardly noticed. "Some things came up that I need to address sooner, so I'm heading back to the Larson family soon."

"What?" I was surprised. As Kathy mentioned, the Larson family was currently under Violet's thumb. Going back there, could he find his footing? Thinking about the lash he took earlier that day made me worry for him.

Mark's smile was evident. "Are you worried about me?"

"A bit, yes."

"Don't be." His face carried a gentle warmth, exuding a reassuring presence. "I know what I'm doing. I won't let myself get into trouble again."

I didn't press further, vaguely guessing his return to the Larson family must be about the girl he liked. Or perhaps it was all for the girl he loved?

I was a tad slow getting out when arriving at the Riverview Estate's garage. Mark got out first and came over to open my door, all gentlemanly and kind, "Head on up."

"Okay." I nodded, and as I stepped out, I glimpsed that tall, imposing figure standing at the entrance, his expression gloomy, almost seething, looking like a husband who had just caught his wife cheating. I frowned as he strode over, his black coat swaying with his movements, adding to his stern demeanor.

Bryant stopped by me, his gaze landing on Mark, his voice cold, "Ever heard of keeping a distance from another man's wife? Or is that basic decency lost on you?"

The tension was thick.

Bryant always had a formidable aura, but Mark didn't falter.

With a calm demeanor, Mark lightly smiled. "If being married means she can't even hang out, maybe you should think about whether you've got some problems."

When noticing the smell of alcohol on me, Bryant's voice turned icy, "A man and a woman out drinking, and you call it just socializing?"

"Then Mr. Ferguson needs to reflect even more." Unyielding, Mark grabbed my bag from the passenger seat and handed it over, a smirk on his lips. "Where were you when your wife was out drinking? What were you doing?"

Bryant's gaze followed me, taking my bag, his jaw tensed, dark eyes swirling with emotions.

He snatched the bag first, his laugh cold. "No need for Mr. Larson to worry about that!"

With that, he grabbed my hand, ignoring my resistance, and tried to push me into the nearby black Maybach!

"Mr. Ferguson!" Mark stepped forward decisively, blocking his way, his voice deep, "Did you even ask Jane if she wanted to?"

The tension in the air seemed to thicken!

Bryant's eyes lowered to me, his chin lifted in a mocking smile, almost commanding, "Answer him."

