

Lost Me, Gained Regret (Jane and Bryant Ferguson)

Chapter 251

"He's Margaret's ex-husband," Bryant caught my puzzled look and explained in a low voice, "It's time she learned her lesson." Suddenly, it clicked for me.

Previously, since Timothy wasn't fond of her, Margaret's attendance at the Ferguson family dinners was a testament to her shameless audacity. Thus, I had never encountered her ex-husband. Employing a taste of her own medicine, even if word got out, people would likely chalk it up to a dramatic breakup scene.

I wasn't one to start trouble, but I wouldn't back down if someone were gunning for me.

Noticing me lost in thought, Bryant ruffled my hair gently. "You okay? Any injuries?"

I shook my head. "No, I'm fine."

But the memory of what happened in that room made me shiver, my hands trembling. I saw concern in Bryant's deep gaze that I hadn't noticed before.

He held me close with utmost patience, stroking my back gently and soothing, "It's okay. I'm here for you."

After a while, I felt a bit better, regained some strength, and moved to sit on a nearby chair.

I was genuinely surprised. "You believe me."

It was unexpected. After that twisted accusation, I thought Bryant would doubt me again, just like what he did with that misunderstanding involving Mark. Bryant frowned. "When have I ever not believed you?"

I blurted out, "Mark."

"That was different," he said coldly, instructing the driver to head to the River Villa.

Upon arriving, he showed no signs of leaving but followed me upstairs. And he entered the house with me.

I raised an eyebrow. "Bryant, this is my home."

"You look pale." He sighed, "I'll leave once you're feeling better, okay?"

I didn't protest any further and headed straight for the shower.

Under the shower, what happened in the hotel room kept crossing my mind until I forcefully shook them away, reminding myself I was safe at home with no strangers around. After a long while, Bryant's voice came from outside the door. "Jane?"

I sniffled before responding, "Yeah?"

"Just making sure you're okay."

"I'm fine." I responded while reaching for the hairdryer, but perhaps due to the lingering effects of the drug and the hot shower, I found the simple act of holding the hairdryer to be an effort. Suddenly, a pair of hands took the dryer from me, awkwardly but gently drying my hair.

Through the mirror, I could see the tenderness in Bryant's actions, his voice gentle, "Is it okay? Not too hot?"

"Yeah, it's fine." This moment, one I had longed for so many times, was finally happening.

His fingers moved through my hair patiently, without a hint of irritation. Time seems to slow down.

"Jane, I'm sorry." Out of nowhere, he spoke up, his voice not raised, making it hard for me to catch everything.

I looked into the mirror, puzzled. "What did you say?"

As he continued to dry my hair, his gaze lowered, his lips barely moving, his voice intermingled with the sound of the hairdryer, yet filled with sincerity and earnestness.

"I never realized you cared for me in that way. I thought you were just after the gifts. I never paid attention to our anniversaries and your birthdays. I've been waiting for you to ask and taking your efforts for granted. Jane, I'm sorry."

He added, "I was never there when you needed me the most. I took everything for granted, never considering you might leave. Jane, I'm sorry. It's not that I don't love you. I just..."

He suddenly looked up, and we locked gaze in the mirror, his eyes reddened by the warmth, his gaze direct and passionate.

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I couldn't catch every word, but the message he tried to convey was crystal clear. A long-dormant part of my heart nearly succumbed once again. My nails dug into my palms. The slight pain brought back a sliver of sanity. "Is it dry now?"

Bryant's fingertips moved meticulously through my hair several times. "Yeah, pretty much done."

The sound of the hairdryer ceased, leaving the room in silence.

I nodded. "Um, thanks."

Then, unexpectedly, he wrapped his arms around me from behind, his lips brushing my ear as he cautiously and ambiguously ventured, "Did you hear any of what I said?"

For someone as distinguished as him, this might have been the first time he had sincerely apologized to someone. Unlike the casual, thoughtless "sorry" from the past, he did lower his guard this time.

I wanted to give in, but fear held me back, the fear of getting burned again, of repeating past mistakes.

With a heavy heart, guided by reason, I responded, "I heard you. But, Bryant, some choices, once made, can't be undone. There's no turning back."

I had loved him for eight years. But I wanted to love myself a little more.

It seemed my words slowly extinguished the innate pride men carry, inch by inch.

He paused, his Adam's apple bobbing as he swallowed, his voice hoarse, "Okay."

"About today..." Ignoring the tightness in my chest, I gently freed myself from his hold and turned to look at him. "Thank you. I'm fine now. You can go."

His gaze lingered on me with reluctance. "So, that's it? You're done with me?"

His direct stare made me uneasy. "What else do you want?"

"I was thinking... maybe I could cook dinner as a way to apologize."

"Fine, go ahead!" With those words, I brushed past him and dove into my work, hoping to distract myself.

When Bryant started cooking, he glanced at the documents on my desk. "Selling the house to start your own business?"

"Yeah." He was bound to figure it out eventually, and there was no point in hiding it. "But it seems tough to sell. The agent mentioned that everyone seemed pleased upon viewing, but then we'd hear nothing back."

It was puzzling indeed. The house was in a prime location and had a great layout. Plus, I had taken good care of it. It was almost as good as new. Logically, it shouldn't have been hard to sell. Bryant touched his nose, looking away. "So, why did you return the money I transferred to you?"

"I didn't want things to get complicated between us. You should focus on the Ferguson Group." I was straightforward, "Besides, Christine is looking for investors. It could be an opportunity."

"Fine then." He seemed contemplative before turning to cook with groceries he had picked up from the table.

Thanks to Margaret's blessing, he could cook well. Soon, the delicious aroma filled the air. A spread of spicy food graced the table in less than an hour.

I was surprised. "All spicy?"

Bryant never cooked spicy food since he didn't eat it himself.

He untied his apron, his gaze soft on me. "It's not just about you accommodating me. I can learn to accommodate you, too."

I was momentarily speechless, not sure what to say. Since Bryant wanted it, I let him be. I had been too shocked and scared earlier to feel hungry, but then, seeing all my favorite dishes, my appetite returned with a vengeance.

Midway through the meal, I noticed Bryant's face flushed and sweat beading on his nose from the spice. "Have some soup. You don't have to force yourself."

He took a large gulp of water. "And the past three years, were they a compromise for you?"

"Not at all," I shook my head.

It thought what it was like to love someone was to be content with sharing every meal with him.

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He liked it, so naturally, I loved it, too. How could it feel forced?

Bryant's deep eyes sparkled intensely. "I'm not unwilling, either. Come on, eat up."

My heart ached for him. "You know your stomach has been acting up."

"You've been putting up with it for three years. Can't I handle it just this once? You're underestimating me." He said earnestly.

I lowered my gaze. "Fine, if you insist."

After dinner, he offered to do the dishes, leaving me guilt-free to continue my work.

It was different with Mark. If Mark did the dishes, I'd feel a twinge of guilt since we were just friends. But with Bryant, I'd taken care of him for three years. His cooking and doing the dishes didn't seem too much to ask.

"Got any painkillers?" I was deep into planning the style for our company's first batch of new products when Bryant, rubbing his stomach, made his way to the couch beside me.

I almost chuckled, getting the pills and placing them before him. "So much for not underestimating you, huh?"

His stomach issues started when he first took over the Ferguson Group. Facing resistance at every turn, he'd often skip meals to settle shareholder disputes and manage his team, not to mention the endless social drinking on an empty stomach. It was a recipe for disaster.

Bryant looked into my eyes. "You've changed a lot."

I asked, "In what way?"

His lips pursed slightly, "You used to panic seeing me in pain."

I paused before replying, "Back then, love clouded my judgment."

Seeing him unwell, I would scramble for any home remedy I could find, brewing stomach-soothing broths daily. I'd avoid flaunting our relationship before the board, waiting instead for him to come home and drink it.

Suddenly, he grabbed my arm, pulling me close. "And now?"

Caught off guard, I fell into his embrace, his familiar scent overwhelming me. The warmth of his body seared my skin, and my heart skipped a beat. Tension spread between us.

I scrambled up. "Now, um, I'm more inclined to ask, shouldn't you be heading home after your medicine? It's getting late."

It couldn't go on like that.

I reminded myself inwardly, 'Jane, don't fall for his traps again.'

Bryant's expression visibly fell, and he fell silent.

"Drink up. You'll be fine." I pointed to the medicine and turned to leave for my room.

Just before I entered, his voice tightened, "Can I, maybe not leave tonight?"

"The couch is all yours." After saying that, I went straight to my room.

Driving with an upset stomach wasn't safe, and if something happened, it'd somehow be my fault. It was too late to ask Kevin to pick him up.

It wasn't because I was soft-hearted. As I drifted off to sleep, the thought faintly crossed my mind. Right, I wasn't being soft-hearted.

The next day, stepping out of my room, I noticed the tall figure sprawled on the couch, belatedly realizing what had transpired the night before. The memories of the previous night slowly pieced together. The winter sun streamed in, covering him with a blanket, his body curled up on the couch, breathing softly, looking unexpectedly harmless.

But that didn't last long.

His phone suddenly rang, and he woke up groggily and answered the call after a glance. It must have been Kevin, and Bryant hung up after a few words. Bryant checked the time, sat up, and looked toward me, somewhat forlornly. "I can sleep so peacefully only when I'm close to you."

"But," I met his gaze, my voice merciless, "I've found that only by keeping my distance from you can I feel at peace."

His fingers twitched as he watched me, his voice still hoarse from sleep, finishing his thought. "Do you... still hate me?"

"It's not that bad." It wasn't about hate. I just wanted a more peaceful life. I pursed my lips. "Are you free today? We should go get our divorce papers."

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The silence in the room was so profound that we could hear a pin drop.

Bryant's eyes, fixed on me unblinkingly, tumultuous with emotions he couldn't seem to dissolve. The indifferent demeanor he usually carried seemed to be faltering. The air grew thick and tight.

After what felt like an eternity, he finally rose slowly, meticulously folding a throw blanket before grabbing his coat from the armchair and draping it over his arm, his voice low, "Sorry for the intrusion last night. I should head out."

I was fiddling with my fingers unconsciously before asking again, "The divorce papers?"

"We'll talk about it later." Bryant avoided my gaze, his long lashes slightly lowered, masking his feelings. "You heard Kevin call. I need to rush back for a meeting."

With those words, he didn't give me a chance to respond, striding away with his long legs as if afraid I'd say something to make him stay.

I looked down at the floor, a bitter smile tugging at my lips as I faintly heard the elevator arrive outside. My phone suddenly rang, pulling me back to reality.

Christine sounded cheerful, "Jane, remember the office space we liked the day before yesterday? They just contacted me, saying the landlady is in RiverCity today and that we can meet in person."

"Of course, I remember." I replied as I tossed my clothes into the washing machine, "Did you make an appointment? I'm free whenever."

Christine smiled. "It's all set. I'll pick you up on my way there."

"Great." After hanging up, I changed clothes and applied light makeup before heading downstairs, where Christine's Audi was already waiting in the garage.

Arriving at the prestigious office building, the real estate agent was waiting in the lobby. "Ms. Webster, Ms. Jackson, please hold on. The landlady will be here soon. Shall we wait for her before going up?" Christine and I had no objections.

The landlord arrived shortly after, but I was surprised to see it was Dorothy's mother.

Susan looked effortlessly elegant, clasping a rare Hermès bag. She barely registered surprise upon seeing me, her demeanor distant and cool. "You're interested in the 16th floor?" she asked. "Yes," I responded, trying to maintain my composure.

As we reached the office, the agent began his enthusiastic introduction, only for Susan to bluntly interrupt, "No need. I know who she is better than you do."

Her words felt like a slap across my face, leaving me uncomfortably numb.

Christine initially thought Susan was putting on airs but then sensed the tension, giving me a questioning look.

I shook my head, and Susan stopped in front of a conference room, her gaze sharp. "Can we talk alone?"

It was about more than just renting office space. Whether it was a blessing or a curse, it seemed unavoidable. I agreed, and we entered the conference room together.

As soon as the glass door closed behind us, Susan didn't hold back. "Ms. Webster, you do know how to play both sides."

I frowned, asking, "What do you mean?"

Her face, barely aged by time, was filled with disdain, "Talking about divorce, then playing the victim right before our eyes. Bryant has walked away from a deal worth billions of dollars for you. Quite the tactic." Hearing that, I was stunned. Unexpectedly, Bryant had given up such a massive deal for me.

Susan disdained. "Ms. Webster, honestly, one should know their worth."

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Susan slid a chair back and sat down, lifting her chin and looking at me with a gaze that screamed wealth and power.

"The current predicament of the Ferguson Group will be a thing of the past once news of a partnership with the Myers family gets out. But you, meddling in our business, are only holding Bryant back. "Indeed, he's among the finest men around, looks, family background, capabilities, and character. Not only in RiverCity but also nationally, there's hardly a match. Clinging to him is understandable.

"But, let's be real. Shouldn't you consider what you deserve? Without a respectable family name, how do you plan to secure your position as Mrs. Ferguson?" Seemingly trivial, her words cut through me like a knife.

I clenched my fists, maintaining an even tone. "Susan, I respect you, but if you can't discern right from wrong for your daughter, don't expect me to be nice."

The audacity to suggest I step aside for her daughter, cloaked in righteousness, was new to me. As if lacking parental backing or a notable family name meant anyone could trample upon me. Susan scoffed as if hearing a joke, "I'd like to see how you plan to be 'not nice' to me."

"The decision to stay married to Bryant, when to divorce, or whether I even want to, that's my call to make." Under her increasingly sour expression, I asked coldly, "Who is the Myers family to pressure me daily?"

That was totally out of line, making cheating sound like something to be proud of!

Susan's face twisted into a grimace. "You've changed your tune quickly, haven't you? You were timid as a rabbit just days ago, and now, you're baring your teeth? Speak, then. If you have anything else to say, out with it!"

"Nothing more to say." I shrugged, my voice cold, "It's rare to see a family that not only condones their daughter being 'the other woman' but also teams up to bully the rightful partner. I've learned quite a bit about the Myers family values today."

Bang!

Susan slammed her hand on the table, glaring at me furiously. "No wonder Dorothy told me you were an orphan, utterly lacking in manners!"

I suppressed my anger, my smile not quite reaching my eyes. "Still, that's preferable to Dorothy's skewed morals!"

With that, I had no desire to engage further, turning to leave.

"Stop." Susan gritted her teeth, "I own a prime office building in Vista Town comparable to this one. If you're thinking of starting your own business, pick any floor. It's yours, free of charge." "And the catch?" I asked, smiling.

There was no such thing as a free lunch, and everyone knew that.

Susan stood up, clutching her purse. "You have to leave RiverCity and never return. Or else, no one will rent space to you, and your business will never get off the ground!"

That was a mix of threats and temptations. As Margaret said the day before, ordinary people are no different from ants in the face of power.

I had no doubt the Myers family had the power to ruin my prospects. Yet, I refused to give in. "Never return? Susan, remember, I haven't signed the divorce papers yet."

"That won't be necessary for you to worry about. Just disappear, and I'll handle the divorce."

She pulled a check from her purse, tossing it lightly on the table. "Consider it a startup fund from me!"

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That was such a grand gesture.

My gaze flicked to the check, spotting a number starting with five followed by a string of zeros.

I had never imagined a scenario straight out of a soap opera would play out in my life. No, it was even more dramatic than that.

In those stories, the male lead's mother would show up with a check, telling the heroine to take a hike. What on earth was happening to me?

I couldn't help but laugh. "So, you think you've got me cornered today?"

So, she was determined to remove me, a mere obstacle, for her precious daughter.

Susan's eyes were cold as she looked at me. "What do you think?"

I picked up the check, and to her satisfaction, I tore it to shreds, letting the pieces fall to the ground as I calmly said, "I'm sorry to disappoint. I'm not taking threats or bribes!"

After all, those with nothing to lose feared nothing. The Myers family had their reputation to consider, but me? I had nothing to fear.

I said coldly, "I don't believe the Myers family can make me vanish into thin air."

"You!" Susan pointed at me, livid. "Don't come crying when you regret not taking the easy way out!"

"Oh, Dorothy is indeed the apple of your eye. You two even share the same lines." I commented dryly, "Maybe try a new script next time. It's getting old."

Then, pulling a hundred-dollar bill from my purse, I slapped it in front of Susan. "Acting like I'm broke? Take this and keep your daughter away from me!" With that, I turned and left, ignoring her flushed face. Humiliation wasn't a privilege reserved for the wealthy alone.

Stepping outside, Christine rushed over, concerned, "What was that about? You know her?"

"Dorothy's mom." I grabbed her hand and headed for the elevator, briefly explaining the situation.

Christine was fuming, tempted to turn back and give Susan a piece of her mind, "Like mother, like daughter. They are birds of a feather, so annoying."

Unfortunately, Susan, not far behind, overheard everything, her face turning crimson. "Birds of a feather!"

"Exactly, that explains why you ended up with trash like Dorothy." Christine smirked, "Your daughter probably stayed away all these years because she couldn't handle the embarrassment of being linked to you."

That was like a verbal dagger. No one ever won an argument with Christine.

Livid, Susan took several steps toward us, hand raised as if to slap Christine, but Christine was quicker.

"Don't touch me. I'm a germaphobe." Christine dodged gracefully, "Calm down. Don't do something rash out of desperation."

After all, desperate times call for desperate measures.

Likely, Susan had been pampered since marrying into the Myers family, never facing such humiliation.

Her chest heaving, she glared at Christine. "Do you have any idea who I am? How dare you insult me?"

"Insult you? If you couldn't catch that, I could carve it on your tombstone later!" With that, as the elevator arrived, Christine pulled me in, leaving Susan looking like shit.

As the elevator doors closed, Christine raised an eyebrow. "Feel a bit better?"

I couldn't help but laugh. "Yeah, a bit."

"That's what I thought!" Satisfied, Christine patted my head like I was a child. "Come on, let's go eat. How about that seafood place behind the school?"

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I said, "Sounds perfect. I haven't had that in ages. Thanks, babe."

Just the mention of that old diner had my mouth watering. It was all about the fresh seafood. A bit of chili and dressing made it unbeatable, contrasting the modern fried and baked ones.

As we got into the car, the real estate agent ran out, panting, "Ms. Webster, Ms. Jackson, hold on a moment. The owner of the suite you checked yesterday morning got back to me. They're willing to lower the rent."

Christine asked, "Which one?"

"The office suite next door." The agent pointed across the street to the towering building.

The rent was steeper there, but Christine and I were taken with it, though we hadn't seriously considered making a move.

After exchanging a glance, Christine and I voiced our decline, "Let's pass. They probably won't drop it by much, and we can't spend that much on the rent right now."

"The owner is willing to drop it to this," the agent said, holding up a few fingers to indicate the number, "They mentioned the need to do a good deed after consulting with a psychic. It seems they're trying to bring some good karma their way."

Christine and I shared a bemused look. Such superstitious reasons left us both a bit puzzled.

On guard from earlier experiences, Christine asked, "We're not going to run into crazies like earlier, right?"

"No, no, the owner's too busy for that. Everything, even the contract signing, is done through courier. Nothing like today will happen again." The agent awkwardly smiled before pressing, "So, what do you say? If you're interested, I'll get the paperwork started."

"We'll take it." Finding a nice office space at the right price is rare, so I hesitated before asking, "Can we pay a deposit first? We'll gather the rest of the money as fast as possible."

Office spaces in this area were highly sought after, with rents typically paid annually. It was a significant amount.

With the Riverview Estate property still on the market and investments up in the air, just scraping together the rent had left Christine and me financially drained.

The agent seemed about to refuse, reconsidered, and quickly agreed, "Sure, sure, that's fine. It's quite common under these circumstances."

Soon enough, we signed the contract and paid the deposit.

We were worried about potential pitfalls, so we sent the contract to our lawyer for review, who assured us that the terms were quite favorable.

On our way to grab some food, Christine pondered, "Do you think it is a case of good luck following bad? When things seemed to go south, someone decides to do a good deed." "Could be," I replied.

I half-expected some complications from the Myers family, but no bad news came from the agent over the next few days. I breathed a little sigh of relief. Nevertheless, I was curious about the owner of the building.

Susan had been furious, so she probably wouldn't let us rent the office without a hitch. Yet, there was no further word from her. It seemed Susan might have tried to intervene but to no avail. The other party didn't take her seriously.

Then, while brainstorming new product ideas, I got a call from Kevin.

Picking up, I asked flatly, "Kevin, is Bryant finally ready to go through with the divorce?"

"Mrs. Ferguson..." Kevin's voice was heavy, and after a pause, he confessed, "Mr. Ferguson has been in an accident. He asked me not to tell you, but seeing him wear those cufflinks you designed for him day and night, I thought you should know."

"What do you mean? What happened?" Suddenly panicked, I jumped up, scrambling for my car keys without fully understanding the situation, but already in a flurry to find out more.

Kevin answered truthfully, "Mr. Ferguson was seriously injured in a targeted attack the night before last."

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I kept telling myself not to care about him anymore, but when I heard he was in trouble, my body reacted unconsciously as if it had been conditioned over the eight years we had been together. It was beyond my control.

Grabbing my car keys, I rushed outside while trying to calm myself down, confirming on the phone, "He's at BlessedCare Medical Facility, right? I'll be right there."

"Yes, Room 1," Kevin responded.

Driving to BlessedCare Medical Facility, I tried to keep my thoughts organized. Despite the difficulties facing the Ferguson Group, it remained a leading corporation in RiverCity, always on the brink of a breakthrough or a comeback.

'Who would dare target Bryant at a time like this?' I thought I had braced myself. But it caught me off guard when I saw Bryant sitting up in bed, pale and unfocused, as a doctor bandaged his arm and chest wounds. My heart clenched, the pain sharp and continuous, like being nibbled by ants.

"Mr. Ferguson..." Kevin noticed me and called out.

Bryant turned, about to respond, when he caught sight of me.

I opened my mouth only to realize my throat was tight. "How did it get this bad?"

The stainless steel tray held blood-soaked bandages, and the wounds were deep and long, visibly painful.

He looked at me, trying to appear nonchalant. "It's nothing, just a scratch."

"Yeah, a 'scratch' that had you unconscious for a day and two nights, waking up just this morning. You're too proud, Mr. Ferguson..." Kevin couldn't resist a jab.

Bryant shot him a look, his tone icy, "Who told you to inform her?"

"It did." Kevin pointed to the cufflink he was fiddling with in his hand and quickly escaped before Bryant could retort.

The doctor finished bandaging the wounds soon, applied medication to a scrape on his forehead, and earnestly advised, "Mr. Ferguson, you might not think much of these injuries, but if you don't take proper care, they'll cause long-term problems. Make sure the wounds stay dry to avoid infection like your previous gunshot wound."

Bryant nodded slightly. "Hmm."

Seeing that his advice was being ignored, the doctor turned to me and said, "Mrs. Ferguson, please make sure he takes care."

I felt awkward, unsure of how to respond. Finally, under the doctor's expectant gaze, I nodded. "I'll inform his assistant."

"Alright, I'll leave you two then." Before I could finish, the doctor cut in and left, reassured.

The room fell silent, leaving just Bryant and me.

I pursed my lips. "Why... didn't you want Kevin to tell me?"

Just a few days ago, he was begging for my forgiveness, not wanting a divorce. Yet, when pity could work in his favor, he chose silence and instructed Kevin to keep me in the dark.

Despite his injuries and a bandaged arm slung around his neck, Bryant's demeanor remained cold and dignified.

"You wouldn't have come if you knew," he said softly, his voice hoarse, a self-mocking smile on his lips. "That would have been too pitiful."

I replied calmly, "If we're talking about pity, I've had my fair share of moments needing you when you weren't there."

"Jane Webster," Suddenly, Bryant called my full name, his voice tender, his eyes full of earnestness and warmth. "You still have feelings for me, don't you? You came when you heard I was hurt. So why won't you give me a second chance to make things right?"

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I let my eyelashes flutter down as I took a deep, silent breath. "It is different."

Deciding on divorce didn't mean I wished any harm to him.

Bryant sat on the bed, reaching out with his long arm to pull me closer, looking up at me. "What's different?"

His gaze had me all over the place.

I said, "Everything's different. If anyone got hurt today, I'd be concerned."

"Anyone?" He echoed my words, his tone turning sharp. "If it had been Mark, would you have rushed over as quickly?"

"Yes," I answered without hesitation, as if to prove a point, adding, "Maybe even faster."

Mark was, after all, a good friend of mine. No one could remain indifferent to a friend getting hurt.

The tenderness in Bryant's eyes vanished instantly, replaced by aggression. "And you'd be fine gazing at his bare chest just like this, shamelessly?"

Only then did I realize he hadn't put on a shirt after changing his bandages, his chest bare except for the gauze. His broad shoulders and well-defined muscles were on full display. My thoughts had been solely on his injuries, not noticing his state of undress.

I felt my cheeks heat up, but his words sparked my anger. "Yes, got a problem with that?"

"Yeah." He stubbornly pulled me closer, irrationally saying, "I won't allow you to look at other men like that, especially Mark."

I retorted, "On what grounds?"

"Because I'm still your husband." Bryant enunciated every word, noticing my displeased expression, and then his tone softened. "Will you help me put on my shirt, please?"

I didn't refuse, picking up the shirt from the hospital bed and softly saying, "You should listen to the doctor and take care of yourself."

He detected the underlying message, a flash of disappointment in his eyes. "You're leaving?"

"Yes," I answered. Making sure Bryant's life wasn't in danger was enough for me. Just a look at him would reassure me. Anything more was unnecessary, only serving to complicate things for us.

I bent down, temporarily removing the gauze from around his neck, stiffening slightly at his unusual body temperature. He had a fever. But it wasn't my place to worry with doctors and nurses around. As if I hadn't noticed, I gently helped him into his shirt, carefully buttoning it up and straightening it. "There, I'll be going now."

He hung his head like a sulking child, jaw clenched, silent.

Exiting the room, Kevin, waiting outside, was somewhat surprised. "You're leaving?"

"Yes." I nodded, and Kevin glanced back into the room, closing the door gently, suggesting tactfully, "Mr. Ferguson was seriously injured. The doctors were reviving him for a good two or three hours. I'm a clumsy guy, afraid I won't be able to take good care of him..."

I understood his hint. Yet, I pretended as if I hadn't, replying restrainedly, "Let the nurses take care of him. The staff here are very attentive."

Kevin sighed, "But no nurse is as good as a wife."

"Kevin, you know better than anyone that we're getting a divorce. It's not my place to take care of him anymore." I reminded him, somewhat helplessly.

Kevin blurted out, "But who else would go through such trouble for an ex-wife?"

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I frowned, catching the crux of the matter, "For me? Did he get hurt this time because of me again?"

Kevin scratched his head. "Uh..."

I racked my brains but couldn't think of any trouble I'd recently caused Bryant. We had barely even spoken these past few days.

Kevin hesitated, so I went straight to the point. "I'm just going to ask him myself if you don't tell me."

"Don't..." Kevin finally compromised, "It's about that abandoned building on the outskirts of town, remember?"

I was shocked. "How could I forget?"

That was the place where my first kidnapping happened, not something easily forgotten. But I thought Bryant had that problem solved.

Mentioning it, Kevin got a bit heated. "That jerk Jarrod, the bald guy, remember? He tried to force us to hand over the lot in West End. When he bit off more than he could chew, he crawled back to Mr. Ferguson, offering a deal but wanting an 80% cut. Mr. Ferguson disagreed."

I asked, "And then?"

Kevin continued, "He got desperate and tried to 'invite' Mr. Ferguson to his turf two nights ago, hoping to force an agreement. But his guys, as dumb as bricks, caused a major car accident while trying to stop Mr. Ferguson's car."

When hearing that, my feelings were mixed. It was because of me.

Seeing my reaction, Kevin added, "Mrs. Ferguson, you know Mr. Ferguson doesn't like others fussing over him, and I'm not the caring type..."

I clenched my hand. "I understand."

After all, he brought himself the trouble while trying to save me last time.

When I entered again, Bryant was about to lie down, wincing from the pain of his injury.

"Why didn't you call for help?" I went over to assist him, letting him use me to ease himself down.

"I don't need anyone else." He said it softly, pulling me closer, causing me to nearly stumble onto his wounds, his eyes filled with anticipation, "Are you worried about me?"

He seemed pleased with himself.

I hurriedly got up, pressing my lips together. "I just found out it was trouble I caused you."

If anything, I felt guilty. The gunshot wound from before nearly took Bryant's life, and because of me, he got injured again.

Bryant paused and softly said, "Don't listen to Kevin's nonsense. It's not your fault."

"Not my fault?" I raised an eyebrow lightly. "If it's not, I'll leave."

He seemed to fear I'd leave, grabbing my hand, his eyes locked on mine, his voice deep, "It's not your fault. I did it willingly."

I was momentarily frozen. It was hard not to be moved. Someone repeatedly getting hurt for me, someone I had wanted for so many years, saying something like that. How could it not stir something within me?

Yet, I dared not continue the conversation, pulling my hand away to steady myself. "Would you like some fruit or maybe some water?"

I had to guard my heart and look after him as I owed, and then we'd be even.

He watched me closely, seeing right through me. "Are you scared?"

The atmosphere became tense.

I confidently responded, "Scared of what?"

"Fear of falling back into..." His soft voice trailed off as the nurse knocked and entered, "Mrs. Ferguson, I've brought some afternoon tea for you and Mr. Ferguson."

Then, she placed the various fruits and desserts from the tray onto the coffee table.

The tension dissipated, and I sighed in relief, turning casually to Bryant, "Which one do you want?"

"Doesn't matter." His mood had soured from the interruption, and his responses were less patient.

I picked up a plate of fruit and brought it to the bedside, offering it to him. "Have some fruit. Get those vitamins in."