

## Chapter 22 Now He Was Alone

Tears streamed down Millie's cheeks in an endless cascade, each drop carrying the weight of her shattered dreams.

Why did everything she desperately wanted to protect always slip through her grasp?

Her father, her husband, the Bennett family legacy, and now... her precious baby had been torn away too.

Nothing remained within her reach, no matter how fiercely she fought to keep it close.

She had exhausted every possible method to preserve what mattered most, but like fine sand escaping through her clenched fingers, everything dissolved into nothingness despite her desperate grip.

The overwhelming sense of powerlessness crushed her spirit.

Millie pressed her palm against her empty belly, her hand slowly curling into a determined fist.

She realized with bitter clarity that she remained too weak, too vulnerable.

She couldn't linger beside anyone as a temporary comfort, nor could she depend on another soul to become her salvation.


The path forward demanded everything she had left to give.

Her career beckoned—she needed to seize control of it with unwavering determination.

The Bennett family legacy—she had to breathe new life into its crumbling foundation.

The mysterious circumstances surrounding her father's death—she needed to drag every hidden truth into the light.

And her relationship with her mother...

She had to pour every ounce of her being into this fight, so the crushing pain would finally lose its grip on her heart. 

Millie wept until her tears ran dry, until her body had nothing left to give.

The sharp edges of her anguish seemed to dissolve, leaving behind a strange, hollow numbness that settled over her like a protective shield.

No overwhelming joy, no crushing despair—perhaps this emotional void wasn't such a terrible thing after all.

This realization sparked something resembling hope within her chest, convincing her that moving forward was still possible.

When Alexia and Charles pushed through the door, Millie had already gathered the scattered pieces of herself back together, her mask firmly in place.

"Here, Millie, I brought you some nourishing chicken soup," Alexia said, her voice carrying genuine warmth as she twisted open the thermos cap. "Please try it and tell me what you think."

Millie accepted the container, breathing in the rich, comforting aroma that rose from the steaming contents.

Under Alexia's hopeful gaze, she lifted the spoon to her lips and savored the first taste, allowing the flavors to dance across her tongue.

"This tastes absolutely wonderful," Millie murmured, surprised by the genuine appreciation in her voice.

"If the flavor pleases you, please have as much as you want," Alexia responded, studying Millie's pallid complexion with concerned eyes. "Focus on getting your strength back."

Millie nodded with newfound resolve blazing in her eyes.

Recovery was no longer a distant dream—it was her immediate mission.

Charles settled into his chair and began sharing the crucial information he had just uncovered during his conversations with his team.

As their conversation flowed naturally between the three of them, on the other side of the city...

Brandon's eyes fluttered open as he lay sprawled across the leather sofa, his body stiff from an uncomfortable night.

His suit jacket served as his makeshift blanket, while the glass ashtray on the coffee table overflowed with the remnants of countless cigarettes.

This sterile apartment near his company headquarters had become his refuge during particularly demanding work periods, though after exchanging vows with Millie, he had rarely needed this temporary sanctuary.

The pounding headache that greeted his consciousness made him wince as he struggled to focus, his hand instinctively reaching for the phone that lay beside him on the cushions.

He scrolled through the endless stream of messages cluttering his phone screen, his thumb moving with practiced efficiency as he bypassed countless notifications until his eyes locked onto Millie's chat thread.

The digital exchange remained painfully one-sided, displaying only his earlier curt message. "I told my grandfather yesterday you weren't feeling well, so you couldn't come. This weekend, you'll be going with me to visit them."

A shadow of irritation crossed his features as he cast the device aside with casual indifference.

Brandon pushed himself upright, his fingers working small circles against his throbbing temples before he rose to his feet, the cool hardwood floor meeting his bare soles as he padded toward the bathroom.

The chrome faucet responded to his touch with a rush of icy water, which he cupped in his palms and splashed against his face in desperate attempts to banish the fog clouding his thoughts.

Yet without warning, his consciousness betrayed him by conjuring memories from years past, when he had endured similar sleepless marathons during the company's most challenging periods, his body wracked with identical bone-deep fatigue.

During those grueling times, Millie had remained steadfast at his side, weathering every storm alongside him, her hands equally stained with the ink of contracts and her eyes equally strained from endless strategy sessions as they witnessed the company's remarkable metamorphosis together.

One particular morning surfaced in his consciousness with startling clarity—he had stood in this exact position, splashing frigid water against his weary face while Millie lingered nearby, a pristine towel folded neatly in her caring hands.

When he had turned to face her, she had approached with the gentle care one might show a beloved pet, dabbing away the water droplets with

tender precision before playfully ruffling his dampened hair.

His instinctive frown had prompted him to reach for the towel, but she had intercepted his movement, her fingertips beginning a soothing massage against his aching temples.

"Does this bring you some relief?" Her voice had carried the softness of silk as it drifted through the air.

The melodic quality of her words had possessed an almost magical ability to ease the tension that had coiled like a spring within his chest.

"Today should finally yield the results we've been working toward, shouldn't it?" She had continued with unwavering optimism. "Brandon, what would you like to eat tonight? I'll prepare whatever your heart desires."

Despite having sampled the most exquisite cuisines from renowned establishments across the globe during business dinners and social obligations, nothing had ever compared to the simple, unpretentious meals she had crafted in their modest kitchen—each dish infused with warmth that no expensive delicacy could ever provide.

That particular day, before he could voice his culinary preference, the shrill ring of his phone had shattered the intimate moment between them.

The news that followed had exceeded his wildest expectations, surpassing even the most optimistic scenarios he had dared to imagine.

He had ended the call with trembling hands, spun around to face her, and swept her into his arms before lifting her off the floor in a spontaneous celebration dance right there beside the running sink.

His sudden burst of euphoria had caught her completely off guard, leaving her with wide, startled eyes when he had finally lowered her back to the tile floor.

Her expression of pure surprise had been absolutely enchanting.

A low chuckle had escaped his throat as he had leaned down to capture her lips in a kiss that tasted of triumph and promise.

The water had continued its steady cascade from the faucet, creating a rhythmic soundtrack to their moment of triumph.

Now, years later, Brandon raised his head to confront his reflection in the unforgiving mirror.

Water clung to his skin in stubborn droplets, while his hair hung in damp strands that framed his face.

His eyes bore the unmistakable marks of countless sleepless nights, their depths reflecting a weariness that seemed to have settled into his very bones.

Now, standing beside the porcelain sink, Brandon found himself in complete solitude, in the silence that seemed to echo with memories of happier times.

His jaw tightened with frustration as he twisted the faucet handle, cutting off the water's steady flow before retrieving a pristine towel from the cabinet to pat his skin dry.

The damp towel landed in the wicker laundry basket with a soft thud as he strode toward the mahogany wardrobe, his movements sharp and purposeful.

Brandon's hands moved with practiced efficiency as he selected his daily uniform—crisp white shirt, charcoal trousers, and his signature tailored suit jacket—but when his fingers reached for a tie, his movements froze mid-motion.

This sterile apartment contained no spare neckties, a glaring oversight that would never have occurred during the years when Millie had been part of his daily routine.

Brandon's jaw clenched as his teeth pressed against his compressed lips.

The memory of the previous night crashed through his defenses like a rogue wave—Millie's eyes widening with disbelief and raw pain as gravity claimed her body and sent her tumbling down the unforgiving stairs.

"Ding-dong!"

The apartment's doorbell shattered his troubled thoughts with its cheerful chime.

Brandon pulled the door open to reveal Vivian standing in the hallway, her delicate frame silhouetted against the morning light.

Vivian's smile bloomed across her pale features, sweet yet tinged with an underlying fragility as she gazed up at him. "Good morning, Brandon. I've brought you fresh flowers to brighten your day—aren't they lovely?"

She stepped closer, cradling a carefully arranged bouquet that she had

assembled with her own hands during the early morning hours, their perfume dancing through the air and creating an aura of vulnerable beauty around her that stirred his protective instincts. Ⓢ

However, his mind immediately conjured Giffard's cutting words from their dawn encounter, delivered with the bite of arctic wind—"If you're set on being with Vivian, then stay with her. What happens to Millie is no longer your concern. Brandon, the only real choice you have now is to let her go."

Brandon's jaw muscles contracted with renewed tension.

Giffard's patronizing and self-righteous attitude had ignited a fire of revulsion within his chest.

Could Millie possibly be orchestrating this elaborate manipulation to force his hand into submission?

Was she resorting to petty theatrics and calculated performances—perhaps even attempting to provoke his jealousy by cultivating a relationship with Giffard?

The sensation of losing control over the situation filled him with a consuming rage that threatened to devour his rationality. Ⓢ

"Is something troubling you, Brandon? Does this particular arrangement not appeal to your taste?" Vivian inquired with genuine concern, her soft voice cutting through his internal turmoil.

His scattered thoughts snapped back to the present moment, and Brandon extended his hand to accept the fragrant offering.

"Not at all," he replied, his voice carrying a deliberate steadiness.

If Millie intended to manipulate him through such transparent tactics, he would demonstrate that Brandon Watson could not be easily bent to anyone's will. Ⓢ

"I find them absolutely enchanting," Brandon assured Vivian, his words carefully chosen to convey appreciation.

Vivian possessed only six precious months remaining in this world.

Her terminal illness bore the weight of his partial responsibility, which meant caring for her had transformed from a choice into an inescapable obligation—a debt that honor demanded he repay.

"That brings me such joy to hear." Vivian's smile bloomed once more,

brightening her entire countenance.

The pair departed the building together shortly afterward, their figures cutting through the morning bustle of the city.

Persistent paparazzi shadowed their every step, their cameras capturing each moment with ruthless precision.

Within hours, a sensational headline had conquered the trending topics across every major platform—"Brandon and Vivian emerge from apartment together. The perpetually impeccable Mr. Watson appeared without his signature tie—was this an oversight or something far more intimate?"

The explosive post featured crystal-clear photographs of Vivian's morning flower delivery and the couple's synchronized departure from the luxury building.

The images ignited a wildfire of speculation and ravenous curiosity among netizens across the digital landscape.

Digital discussions erupted into a frenzy of theories and debates, but this time, Millie chose to break her customary silence by issuing an official public response.



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