

The IVF Secret That Shook a Dynasty

Chapter 17

Melanie turned to them and asked politely, "Hello, is the child in there your..."

"He's our grandson. What's it to you? Who are you?" Evelyn's tone was hostile.

Sensing their suspicion, Dr. Tyson quickly intervened. "We're visiting a patient and got the wrong room. Our apologies."

As he spoke, he gestured to the caregiver holding Melanie. The caregiver understood immediately, helped Melanie back into her wheelchair, and quickly pushed her away.

Sheridan gave Zebulon and Evelyn an awkward smile. "Sorry to have bothered you."

Evelyn watched them retreat, muttering under her breath. "That old woman was wearing a patient gown, and she was with a doctor. She must be a patient here. But they were acting so shifty. Do you think they could be kidnappers disguised as patients, trying to steal children?"

Zebulon shot back, "Would kidnappers be stupid enough to steal a kid with leukemia? Come on, let's find Vivica. Zahar is still at the police station!"

Dismissing the strange encounter, they pushed open the door to the room.

Vivica had just finished cleaning up the last of the shorn hair from the floor when she heard her parents' voices outside. She didn't go to greet them; instead, a wave of irritation washed over her. They had called her several times that morning, but she had ignored every call. She knew exactly what they wanted: to convince her to soften up, patch things up with Fletcher, and save her marriage.

"Vivica, have you had lunch? Look, I brought you some chicken soup. Have some," Evelyn said, walking in with a smile and holding up a thermal container.

Vivica was taken aback by her mother's uncharacteristic kindness. Her expression remained cool, and she didn't respond or even greet them. The sting of her father's slap was still fresh in her mind.

Zebulon noticed her attitude and huffed. "What, are you still mad about the other day? It's a father's right to discipline his child."

"And have you ever, in your entire life, disciplined Zahar?" Vivica asked calmly.

Her younger brother, Zahar, was six years her junior and the spoiled prince of the family. He had never been disciplined, let alone hit.

Zebulon was caught off guard and was about to lose his temper again, but Evelyn cut him off. "Vivica, don't mind your dad. Come, drink the soup. I went to the market especially to buy a free-range chicken. The broth is delicious."

Vivica had barely eaten since learning of her son's illness. The aroma of the soup and the rare sight of her mother's gentle expression stirred a sense of grievance in her, and for a moment, she relented.

"Okay. Thanks, Mom," she said softly, taking the bowl.

But after just one sip, she frowned. The soup had a strong, artificial bouillon flavor. It wasn't made from a fresh chicken at all; it was clearly takeout from a restaurant. She stared into her spoon and let out a bitter, silent laugh. And here she'd thought her mother was actually showing some concern for her for once.

On the bed, Chaim was playing with a toy and didn't greet his grandparents.

Zebulon, anxious about his son, was getting impatient, but his wife kept shooting him looks, signaling him to wait. He had no choice but to hold back. His gaze fell on his grandson.

"Why'd you shave his head? He looks like a little monk."

As he spoke, he reached out to touch the boy's head. But Chaim jerked away.

"Don't touch me."

His reaction stunned the adults in the room.

Zebulon's temper flared. "You little brat! I'm your grandfather! What kind of attitude is that?"

"You hit Mommy. I don't like you," the boy replied without flinching.

Enraged, Zebulon raised his hand.

"Dad!" Vivica scrambled to her feet and threw her arms around her son. "Chaim is sick. Please don't take it out on him."

"Waaah!" Safely in his mother's arms, Chaim burst into tears. "I don't want Grandpa! Grandpa is mean. Grandpa is a bad man, a bad man..."

"See!" Zebulon roared. "He's already so disrespectful. He'll probably disown us all when he's older! And you! You can't raise a child right, you can't even keep your husband—"

"That's enough!" Evelyn cut in, pulling her husband back. While her words seemed to defend her daughter, her expression was a flurry of winks and nods, reminding him of their purpose for being there. "The boy is sick, why are you arguing with him? Vivica's life is hard enough as it is."

Seeing her son wailing, Vivica's heart ached. She comforted him for a moment, then hardened her resolve and turned to her parents.

"You should both go. And take this soup with you. I need to take care of Chaim, so I won't have time to visit. Just take care of yourselves. You don't need to come to the hospital."

It would save her son the upset and herself the heartache.

Seeing the cold look on her daughter's face, Evelyn knew the conversation had soured. But they couldn't leave empty-handed. After a moment's hesitation, she forced a smile.

"Vivica, it's fine if you can't come visit, but... we need some more money."

More money? Vivica's head snapped toward her parents, her heart turning to ice.

"So you brought me this fake chicken soup and pretended to be nice just so you could ask for money?"