

The IVF Secret That Shook a Dynasty

Chapter 18

Exposed, Evelyn's face flushed, but her favoritism for her son won out. "Vivica, this time it's different! Zahar is in trouble. We had no other choice but to come to you."

"What did he do this time? Did he get a terminal illness too?" Vivica couldn't help but sneer.

"Don't say such things! What kind of sister wishes that upon her own brother?" Zebulon bellowed, his face red with anger.

Evelyn held her husband back and explained with a pained expression, "He was out riding his motorcycle with friends today and hit an old man, breaking his leg. The family is demanding an arm and a leg—four hundred thousand dollars! You have to help us, or your brother will go to jail."

Four hundred thousand. Vivica could only laugh coldly at the number. "He's over eighteen. He's an adult. Let him go to jail. It's time he took responsibility for his actions."

Evelyn couldn't believe her daughter's heartlessness. "Vivica, how can you be so cruel? He's your brother! Are you just going to stand by and watch his life be ruined?"

"What do you expect me to do? A few months ago, Dad said he was starting a restaurant and took two hundred thousand from me. I told you then that I had no more money. Now Chaim is sick and needs five hundred thousand for treatment, and you're asking me for another four hundred thousand. Do you think I'm a printing press?"

"You may not have money, but Fletcher does!"

"We're getting a divorce! He won't even pay for Chaim's medical bills. Why would he clean up his brother-in-law's mess?"

Evelyn grabbed her daughter's hand, pleading, "Don't get a divorce. You're in your late twenties. Where will you find another man as successful as Fletcher? Just go and beg him, talk to him nicely. He won't leave you."

Vivica said nothing.

"Vivica, listen to me, you can't get a divorce. Your father's restaurant is just getting started and hasn't turned a profit yet. What if he runs into cash flow problems again? Zahar doesn't have a degree. If we don't save up some money for him to get married, what will he do? He's the only son in the Lynn family, we can't just watch him—"

Vivica couldn't listen anymore. She wrenched her arm free and began pushing her mother toward the door. "You only ever see your son! You've never treated me like a daughter! I'm just your personal blood bank! You don't deserve to be parents!"

Zebulon, furious that his daughter would refuse to help, erupted. "Vivica, I'm telling you, you're going to help this time whether you like it or not!"

Vivica laughed. "Or what? Should I just give my life back to you?"

"Smack!"

Zebulon's hand flew, and another slap landed across her face. Evelyn reached out to stop him, but she was too late.

"Aiyah! Why did you hit her again? We're counting on her to get the money to save our son, you fool—"

As Evelyn scolded her husband, Chaim rushed forward, hitting them with the toy model in his hand.

"Grandpa's bad! Grandma's bad! Don't you hit my mommy! I hate you! Get out!"

Ruby, returning from her lunch break, walked in on the scene and quickly tried to intervene.

Seeing that they would get nowhere today, Evelyn angrily dragged her husband out of the room.

Once the room was quiet, Ruby saw the red handprint on Vivica's cheek and her heart ached. "How can there be parents like that in this world..."

Chaim clung to his mother, crying in fear. Vivica fought back her own emotions and soothed her son. After a while, when the boy had calmed down a bit, she turned to Ruby. "Ruby, please stay with Chaim. I need to step out for a bit."

Worried she might do something drastic, Ruby whispered, "No matter how hard things get, they will pass. You still have your son."

Vivica nodded. "Don't worry, I can handle it."

The moment she stepped out of the room, tears streamed down her face. She never thought she'd become the tragic heroine of her own story, bled dry by the very people who were supposed to love her. They didn't care how hurt she was, didn't care about their grandson's illness, didn't even care if he lived or died. All they saw was their son, that useless troublemaker.

The despair was overwhelming. With nowhere to go, she felt a suffocating tightness in her chest and just wanted some air. She walked to the open-air terrace at the end of the connecting corridor.

The wind was strong. The early winter air whipped against her tear-soaked face, a stinging pain like a thousand tiny needles. As she thought about the betrayals of the past few days—her husband, her son's illness, her parents' cruelty—for a fleeting moment, she thought about jumping, ending it all in an instant.

There was no one around, so she didn't have to pretend to be strong anymore. She slid down the wall, huddled on the ground, and wrapped her arms tightly around herself, letting the tears flow freely, washing away the pain and grief in her heart.

She cried for what felt like an eternity, and slowly, the tightness in her chest began to ease. She sniffled and looked up, about to push herself to her feet, when the fire escape door on the other side of the terrace swung open.

A jolt of panic shot through her—how embarrassing to be seen like this. But when she saw who it was, she froze.

Standing in the doorway was the same imposing man she had run into in the elevator. His presence was powerful, stern, and unapproachable.

Their eyes met. Joseph's gaze hardened, his cool, resolute expression faltering for a fraction of a second.