



Chapter 4

The rain hadn't stopped by the time I turned into the driveway. It fell in silver ribbons under the streetlight — thin and endless — blurring the edges of the world until the house looked like something out of a dream half-forgotten. The windows glowed softly through the downpour, gold light spilling across the dark, rain-slicked yard. It should have felt safe. Familiar. But instead, it twisted something deep in my chest.

Daniel's car sat where it always did, rainwater pooling beneath the tires, wipers frozen mid-motion. Everything looked the same.

But nothing felt the same.

For a long moment, I just sat there — the hum of the engine low, the wipers dragging back and forth in a tired rhythm. The rain on the windshield sounded like static, like a heartbeat that wasn't mine. My reaction stared back at me — pale, drawn, eyes too bright, lips trembling with words I hadn't found yet.

When I finally cut the engine, the sudden silence was deafening.

The cold hit me first. Then the rain. It soaked through my coat in seconds, cold fingers crawling down my spine. Puddles rippled beneath each step as I crossed the walkway. By the time I reached the porch, water dripped from my hair, tracing the curve of my jaw, the hollow of my throat.

The key turned in the lock. The door gave way.

Warmth met me — but it was the wrong kind. Too still. Too quiet. The air carried Daniel's scent — coffee, cedar, the faint musk of rain — but beneath it was something else. Something sharp. Different. A note that didn't belong.

"Daniel?" My voice came out small. Fragile.

He was there, in the living room, sitting on the edge of the couch. Shoulders hunched. Head bowed. The lamp beside him cast a dull amber glow, making the rain on the window shimmer like falling glass. The television was dark. His phone lay face down on the table beside an untouched mug.

When he looked up, his eyes met mine.

"Hey."

Just one word. Soft. Careful. But it cut through me like glass.

"Hey," I echoed, setting my bag down. My fingers lingered on the strap, anything to delay what was coming. "What's going on? You said you needed to talk."

He nodded slowly, his gaze icking toward the rain outside before finding me again. His voice was calm — too calm.

"I didn't want to worry you," he said. "I just... didn't want to say this over the phone."

Something cold unfurled in my stomach. "Say what?"

He ran a hand through his hair, a gesture I'd seen a thousand times — when he was tired, when he was unsure. But tonight, it looked different. He couldn't meet my eyes.

"I've been trying to figure out how to tell you," he murmured. "I didn't mean for any of this to happen."

"Daniel..." My voice faltered. "What are you talking about?"

He looked at me then. And in that instant, I knew. It was in his eyes — the sorrow, the shame, the quiet devastation.

"I got someone pregnant," he said.

The words didn't hit me all at once. They drifted through the air, slow, deliberate, cruel in their clarity. Then everything inside me split.

For a heartbeat, the only sound was the rain — relentless, pounding against the windows like applause for something tragic.

"I don't—" My throat closed around the words. "I don't understand."

"I'm sorry, Marian," he said, his voice breaking around my name. "When I left last month for the business trip... my colleague took me out to dinner. There were drinks, too many. It just — happened. And yesterday she called to tell me she's pregnant."

Each word landed heavy, like stones dropped in water.

I blinked, my vision blurring. "That's why you didn't call last night. Why you stayed late. Why you left so early this morning."

He inched. "No. No, love. I didn't see her today. I swear. I just... we went to the doctor yesterday to confirm it. The timeline fits. I didn't know how to tell you."

Silence.

The kind that fills every corner of a room and squeezes the air from your lungs.

"You know what today is," I whispered.

He looked confused for a second. Then it hit him. Too late.

He forgot.

A laugh slipped out — small, broken, sharp. It sounded wrong in the quiet room.

"Marian—"

"Don't." I lifted a hand. "Please don't."

I turned away, my breath trembling, my reaction catching in the dark window — a ghost of someone who still loved a man she no longer recognized. Tears blurred everything into streaks of gold and shadow.

For a moment, neither of us moved. The only light came from the lamp — soft and golden, wrapping the scene in cruel beauty. Outside, the rain kept falling, the sound of it like a thousand tiny heartbreaks against the glass.

When I finally spoke, my voice barely rose above a whisper.

"I don't want to hate you," I said. "So please... if you still care about me at all, don't say another word tonight. Just let me go upstairs and pretend, for a few hours, that this isn't real."

He nodded once, eyes glassy but dry. "Okay."

I turned toward the stairs. My legs felt heavy, the air thick. Each step echoed faintly, the sound swallowed by the storm.

The light from the living room faded behind me until only the shadows remained.

In the bedroom — our bedroom — everything looked the same. But the air was colder. The bed still unmade, his pillow untouched.

I sat on the edge of the mattress, tracing the faint crease where he'd slept that morning. The space beside me felt impossibly wide now.

Outside, the rain kept falling — steady, endless — as if the sky itself refused to look away.