



Chapter 6

Sometime later, Katherine came to the house, calling my name.

Her voice echoed faintly through the walls—soft, distant, distorted—like sound traveling through water. Everything around me felt muted, submerged in a strange stillness. My body was heavy, the cold biting through my skin and sinking into my bones until even my heart felt frozen. The silence was deafening, except for Daniel’s words that kept reverberating in my head, bouncing endlessly off the four corners of the room.

“I got someone pregnant.”

I lay sprawled on the bedroom oor, the phone still clutched tightly to my chest like a life preserver. I couldn’t cry anymore. My tears had run dry, leaving behind only an aching hollowness that pulsed with every beat of my heart.

This was how Katherine found me—motionless, broken, and barely breathing in the middle of what used to be my sanctuary.

“Marian! Oh my God! Marian!” She rushed to my side, kneeling on the oor beside me, her hands trembling as she tried to lift my face. “What happened? Is it Daniel? Where is he?”

Her voice, sharp and alive, nally pierced through the fog in my head. Something inside me cracked open. I reached out, clutching her tightly, desperate for warmth, for anything that could keep me from drowning in this unbearable ache.

“What happened?” she asked again, her tone softer now, trembling with fear.

And then the words began to tumble out of me—broken, disjointed, swallowed by sobs. I told her what happened after I came home last night, how the conversation unfolded, how Daniel’s confession had shattered me piece by piece. I didn’t know if she understood any of it. The sentences came out in fragments, my voice mued and uneven, like a radio losing signal.

“How can he do this to me, Katherine?” I choked out nally. “I thought I’d given him everything—everything I have. How could he hurt me like this? What’s wrong with me? Why am I not enough?”

“Nothing is wrong with you, Marian,” Katherine said rmly, though her own eyes were glistening. “This isn’t about you. This is on Daniel—on his choices, not yours. You gave your all to this marriage. It’s proof of how much you loved him—how much you both—”

“Then why, Katherine? Why?!” I cried out, my voice cracking with anguish. The sound that escaped me wasn’t just a sob. It was a wound torn open. It lled the room, sharp and raw, until it felt like even the air was trembling.

All I could think, again and again, was that there must have been something missing in me—something Daniel had to search for elsewhere. Maybe I wasn’t enough. Maybe I had never been enough.

Katherine pulled me close and held me as I wept. She didn’t try to hush me or offer hollow reassurances. She simply stayed—crying with me, breathing with me, reminding me through her touch that I wasn’t alone.

“Just cry it out, Marian,” she whispered. “I’m here. I’m not leaving.”

Time lost meaning. I don’t know how long we stayed like that—minutes, hours, an eternity. The next thing I remember was opening my eyes to the soft glow of evening. The ceiling above me swam in and out of focus. My body ached from exhaustion, and for a brief, blissful second, I almost believed it had all been a dream.

“Oh, thank God, you’re awake.” Katherine’s voice was gentle, but relief was clear in her tone. “For a moment, I thought I’d have to call an ambulance.”

I blinked, disoriented. “What time is it?”

“It’s seven p.m., hon.” She smiled faintly, placing a tray of food on the side table before sitting beside me. “You need to eat something. I brought dinner.”

“What... what happened?” I asked slowly, my voice hoarse.

“What do you remember?” she countered softly.

“I remember your call... and then nothing. It’s all foggy, like my mind’s wrapped in smoke,” I said, frowning as I tried to piece the fragments together.

“You were crying when I called,” she explained. “I kept hearing you but you wouldn’t respond, so I came here and used the emergency key we both keep. When I got in, you were on the oor, barely conscious.”

As she spoke, the memories began to resurface—hazy at rst, then sharp and vivid. The oor. The sobbing. The cold. And then... someone lifting me.

“Did Daniel come back?” I asked quietly.

Katherine hesitated, then nodded. “Yes. After you told me what happened, we stayed on the oor. You wouldn’t move, and you were shaking so badly... until you just passed out. That’s when Daniel came. He picked you up and carried you to bed.”

I nodded faintly. Yes, I remembered now. The strong arms lifting me, the faint scent of his cologne. And the voice—apologizing, begging for forgiveness. It had been him.

“Where is he now?” I asked.

“I told him to leave,” Katherine said, her tone rm but full of concern. “You were hysterical, Marian. I didn’t know how you’d react if you woke up and saw him still here. I was scared for you.”

I swallowed hard, my throat tight.

“I’m sorry I worried you,” I whispered. “But I’ll be okay. I have to be. I’ll survive this, just like I survived everything else.”

And I meant it, even if the words felt fragile in my mouth.

Because I wasn’t new to pain. I had lost both my parents young, learned to stand on my own when the world offered no hand to hold. I had rebuilt myself before. I had found love, laughter, a home.

I truly believed Daniel was the ending I’d always wanted—the one my parents never got to see. I thought our love was strong enough to last a lifetime. But it wasn’t. It had only taken one drunken night, one careless week apart, to tear down everything we’d built.

How fragile love could be.

How easily it could shatter, leaving only echoes in its place.

And yet, somewhere beneath the pain, a quiet strength began to stir.