

Chapter 5

The weekend arrived, but Bennett didn't go to the hospital gala.

He spent the whole day with me, from making me breakfast in the morning to lying in bed together at night.

This was unprecedented.

Bennett had always been intensely dedicated to his work, sometimes going entire years without proper time off.

Later, his schedule had become somewhat more flexible.

Yet he'd never had much time for me, because in Bennett's priorities, his career and personal pursuits consistently came first.

Now there was Sharlene.

As for why he could be available today, it was his guilt, most likely, to compensate for abandoning me at our engagement party, to make up for postponing our wedding, and for all those lies.

He certainly had reason to feel guilty, but his remorse no longer mattered to me.

My thoughts were wandering when Bennett moved closer, his arm circling my waist.

His warm breath brushed my ear, his voice tender. "Maddie..."

I subtly turned away from his kiss. "It's that time of the month. I'm not feeling well."

Bennett paused, glancing at the calendar. "But you're not due until the 19th. Is it

early?"

I'd forgotten. Bennett always kept track of my cycle, and under his care, it had been remarkably regular.

I looked away uncomfortably. "Mmm," I murmured vaguely.

He didn't press further, releasing me and getting up.

"I'll make you some hot chocolate. It'll help you warm up."

Watching him leave, I felt conflicted.

How could someone be so attentive yet unwilling to truly love you?

Within half an hour, Bennett returned with a steaming mug.

"Let it cool a bit before drinking. Finish it and get some rest.

"The hospital just sent some patient files. I need to review them in the study. Don't wait up for me."

I nodded, watching him depart.

I drank the hot chocolate and drifted into a sleep.

Sometime later, the sound of the electronic lock startled me awake.

His side of the bed was empty. I got up and checked the study, but no one was there either.

Bennett had gone out.

What could require his attention this late?

In the past, I would have immediately assumed an emergency surgery.

Now, I wasn't so sure.

I picked up my phone and opened Sharlene's Twitter.

Sure enough, she'd posted two minutes ago.

"Spontaneous sunrise trip! So grateful for a certain man who humors my whims and makes all my wishes come true."

The attached chat screenshot clearly showed Bennett's profile picture.

Sleep was impossible after that. I stood by the window until the chilly dawn air cleared my thoughts, then returned to the bedroom to pack.

I removed my engagement ring and placed it in the study desk drawer, returning it to Bennett.

I took out a scrapbook filled with his handwritten notes and fed every page into the shredder.

I continued packing and clearing out my belongings methodically.

As I was placing my suitcase in the corner, Bennett returned with the morning dew still fresh on his clothes.

He met my gaze, his lips tightening briefly. "When did you wake up?"

I lied calmly. "Just now. Where were you?"

He relaxed slightly. "Morning run. The air was great today."

Commented [Ma1]:

Hearing this, I nearly laughed bitterly.

When had our relationship become nothing but lies?

Bennett wiped the light sweat from his brow and headed to the kitchen.

"Still having cramps? What would you like to eat? I'll make it for you."

I was about to decline when the doorbell rang.

Bennett turned and opened the door, stopping short. "Mom, Dad? What brings you here?"

Seeing Edmund Webster and Quintina Webster, I felt immediate apprehension. Sure enough, Quintina spoke first, frowning. "Benny, what's happening with you and Maddie? Why was the wedding

cancelled?"

Quintina showed him her phone. "It was Maddie's message. Look, this is what your aunt received."

The screen clearly showed the notification I'd sent days earlier.

Bennett's expression tightened. He turned to me.

"Maddie, is this true?"