

Chapter 7

The video had been posted hours earlier.

By now, the hospital had issued a statement confirming the assailant was in custody, and no medical staff were injured.

Public attention had swiftly shifted to Bennett and Sharlene.

Both were attractive, and soon their college romance was dug up online, with countless netizens declaring them a perfect match.

"They're so perfect for each other! A surgeon risking his hands? That's true love. Can they just get married already?"

"I just read their story on Reddit. It's the ultimate second-chance romance!"

"Fate keeps pulling them back together after all these years, making them realize they never stopped loving each other... Seriously, someone needs to write this love story!"

Reading these comments, I finally spoke into the phone, realizing Quintina was still on the line.

"I understand, Mrs. Webster. I'll go check on him right now."

After hanging up, I drove to the hospital.

I found my way to his office. Just as I reached the door, I heard Sharlene's muffled sobs from inside.

"This is all my fault. I shouldn't have gotten involved. Your hand was nearly injured..."

A faint red mark was shown on his arm where the knife had sliced through his sleeve.

But Bennett seemed unconcerned, patting her shoulder reassuringly. "It wasn't your fault. It was an accident."

Sharlene took the opportunity to hug him.

Bennett seemed to stiffen for a second, but he didn't push her away.

They stood there quietly embracing, while I leaned against the wall outside his office, feeling completely numb.

I turned and slipped into the stairwell.

I waited until Sharlene left before walking into Bennett's office.

He looked surprised to see me.

"What are you doing here?"

"Your parents saw the news online and are worried," I said flatly. "You should call them."

I turned to leave.

"Wait!" Bennett stood up quickly, catching my arm. "Are you angry?"

I shook my head. "No."

His hands and career were his own business. If he wanted to risk them for Sharlene, that was his choice.

It had nothing to do with me.

Bennett was quiet for a long moment before speaking suddenly. "Maybe we should just keep our original wedding date."

The suggestion took me by surprise.

"That date was three days ago. It's passed."

He looked uncertain. "I must have the dates mixed up... Let's go home together."

He finished speaking with a soft exhale that could have been either weariness or relief.

I heard it but chose to ignore it.

When we arrived home, Bennett noticed the change immediately. "You've cleaned?"

To remove all traces of myself, I'd have to clean the entire house.

Now, nearly everything visible belonged to him alone.

"You prefer things tidy."

He pressed his lips together, a vague unease settling over him that he couldn't quite explain.

"You didn't need to do all this. I could have helped when I got back..."

Quintina called me again.

I handed my phone to him and retreated to the bedroom.

The calendar showed my departure date circled.

I picked up a pen and crossed out today's date.

Two days remained.

As I finished, Bennett entered with my phone.

I reached for it without noticing his troubled expression. "Finished? Let's get some sleep."

But he held the phone tighter. "You got a message. Your passport is ready for pickup."

"Are you planning a trip? Where are you going?"

I hesitated, caught off guard by the timing.

"Yes, I'm going abroad. There are major exhibitions in Marseille and Paris."

Bennett relaxed his grip on my phone. "I see."

"Did you send the new wedding date to our guests yet?"

"Let's discuss it tomorrow. It's too late tonight." I took my phone and slipped it

tonight." I took my phone and slipped it under my pillow before turning off the light.

That night, neither of us broke the silence, though we both lay awake.

We lay beside each other but lived in separate worlds. There was no going back to what we once were.