Swapping a Broken Heart for a New Start

Chapter 18

Camila Davis was completely blindsided by the drama she'd just started. Before she could even get a word out, Jordan Smith's sharp blue eyes narrowed, and he cut in, "Of course you have a seat!"

Then he shot her a cold look and scolded, "Camila, don't push it. Sandra's just trying to be a good host, and you're being downright rude."

Watching him defend Sandra Taylor without a moment's hesitation, Camila felt a fresh sting inside—like someone had ripped open an old wound.

She was supposed to be the guest of honor at this dinner. It was Sandra who'd invited herself along, but Jordan was acting like he didn't even see that. When had she ever noticed he was so damn biased?

Camila was about to snap back, but Nancy James, sitting next to her, looked terrified. And who could blame her? Jordan Smith was the CEO of The Smith Group—the richest man in Harrisburg. Nobody wanted to get on his bad side, especially not now that Camila had already quit her job. If Jordan decided to blacklist her from the industry, it'd be over in a heartbeat.

Nancy quickly grabbed Camila's hand, whispering, "Mr. Smith, Camila didn't mean anything by it, please don't be upset... She's spent years working herself to the bone in the lab, and now that she's leaving, it's just hard to let go. That's all. Please, don't hold it against her."

The other colleagues chimed in, trying to smooth things over. "Yeah, Mr. Smith, let's just let it go," someone added.

"Ms. Taylor, Camila's not like that, you must have misunderstood..."

Everyone was scrambling to keep the peace.

Just then, a waiter swept in with steaming plates—steak, mashed potatoes, and roasted Brussels sprouts—breaking up the tension with a practiced smile. Someone raised a glass, complimenting the chef and offering a toast to Jordan and Sandra, shifting the mood.

Jordan finally looked away, his expression cooling, no longer interested in arguing.

Nancy let out a shaky breath and piled some food onto Camila's plate, whispering, "Don't make a scene. People like them... we can't afford to cross. Just let it go. You don't want this affecting your career down the road."

Camila felt Nancy's kindness and, for her sake, forced herself to swallow her anger. Nancy had helped her a lot when she first joined The Smith Group. She could hold back—just this once.

Before long, dinner officially began. The tension around the table eased as wine flowed and everyone started to relax.

Jordan, usually so reserved and untouchable, was actually mingling for Sandra's sake, so a few brave souls started coming up to toast him.

Sandra noticed and jumped in, saying, "Jordan's stomach isn't great—he shouldn't drink too much. I'll take the next round for him."

She snatched up his glass and downed the drink in one go, grinning. Jordan didn't stop her; instead, he looked at her with a rare softness.

"Don't overdo it," he said quietly. "You'll get drunk."

Sandra winked at him and laughed, "I can handle my liquor these days, trust me!"

Jordan just smiled, letting her have her way.

The vibe between them was unmistakable—and left everyone else out in the cold.

Camila felt sick watching it all. She'd spent three, four years looking after Jordan, making him chicken noodle soup, ginger tea, anything to nurse him back to health. He'd never once treated her this kindly. Everything she did, he just took for granted.

Now Sandra blocks a couple of drinks for him and he acts like she hung the moon.

So that's the magic of a first love, huh?

Camila's stomach churned. Maybe it was the wine, maybe it was something else, but she excused herself and hurried to the restroom. She just stood there, bracing herself against the tiled wall, but nothing came up.

She stayed until she was sure dinner was almost over, then headed back, planning to slip out quietly.

But just as she pushed open the door to the private dining room, she found herself staring straight at Jordan Smith and Sandra Taylor—locked in an embrace.