

Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 121:

Liam let out a snort of disdain. “Married to what? That old man? He can barely stand without your arm. In a few years, you’ll be stuck nursing him until he dies. Why chain yourself to that?”

Her eyes narrowed. “And your point?”

He straightened, a smirk spreading across his face. “Come back to me.”

Cathryn’s disbelief hardened into a glare. A month ago, he’d sworn he would never regret their divorce. Now he wanted to crawl back? She let out a low, derisive hum. “And what about Jordyn?”

Liam leaned in, his voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. “We keep things secretive.”

She stared at him, floored by the shamelessness.

He only arched a brow. “You hide it from your husband, and I’ll hide it from Jordyn.”

A laugh broke from her—sharp, incredulous. The absurdity was almost funny. When she’d worn his ring, Liam had betrayed her with Jordyn. Now that Jordyn wore the ring, he wanted to betray Jordyn with his ex-wife. The man was addicted to adultery.

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Liam mistook the faint curve of her mouth for agreement. He leaned closer, his breath grazing her ear, voice low and insistent. “Tonight. Olekgan Hotel, Room 8011. The room key card will be waiting at the front desk under Ms. Moore’s name.”

Her stomach clenched, revulsion rising so fast it scorched her throat. Three years as his wife, and he had barely spared her a glance. Now, divorced, he...

...dared to crave an affair with her—his discarded ex-wife. What did he take her for?

Her voice stayed cool, slicing through the tension like glass. “Aren’t you afraid Jordyn will find out?”

A slow, triumphant smile tugged at his mouth. One brow lifted, his voice steeped in disdain. “Relax. She won’t. I hid Jordyn for three years right under your nose, didn’t I?”

Cathryn's fingers curled into a fist, the urge to drive it straight into Liam's jaw burning through her veins. She forced herself to unclench, nails biting into her palm instead.

"You will come, won't you?" Liam's voice dripped with expectation.

Cathryn fluttered her lashes, a sweet smile masking the ice in her chest. "Of course." She'd let Jordyn taste what it felt like when another woman stole her man.

A satisfied grin spread across Liam's face. He'd been right—Cathryn couldn't let him go. The thought of finally having sex with her tonight sent a feverish rush of heat through his body.

Far across town, Andrew lay sprawled in bed, restlessly scrolling through the cake shop's feed. Post after post flashed by—smiling couples, cakes cut into perfect slices, photos and videos splashed all over the internet.

He flicked through each one with a growing ache, searching for Cathryn. They had been apart barely an hour, and already she felt like an absence carved out of him.

Then he saw her, standing in line. His heart leapt—only to plummet a beat later. Beside her stood a man: Liam. Shoulder to shoulder with her, looking far too comfortable, far too much like a couple.

Andrew snatched up his phone and called Gavin at once. “Who is with her in line?”

“I twisted my ankle, Mr. Brooks,” Gavin replied. “Mrs. Brooks went alone.”

Andrew’s brow furrowed, the muscles in his jaw tightening. Had she simply run into Liam by chance? He decided to wait—to probe her later and see whether she would tell him herself. If she mentioned meeting Liam, it was coincidence. If she stayed silent, she was concealing something.

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Either way, the image of Cathryn beside Liam clawed at Andrew, jealousy burning through his chest like acid.

With a sharp snap, Andrew killed the screen and hurled the phone aside.

The line outside the bakery finally moved, bringing Cathryn and Liam to the counter. The shop assistant greeted them with a bright smile. “Are you two lovebirds here for the ‘Just Us Two Together Forever’ heart cake?”

Cathryn opened her mouth to deny it, but Liam jumped in first. “Yeah, we are.”

The shop assistant beamed and produced a small heart-shaped lock. “You can write your names on this and hang it on our love tree. Keep the key as a symbol of your bond—may the two of you stay happy together forever.”

Liam, clearly enjoying himself, grabbed the pen and wrote “Liam & Cathryn” in bold letters right in front of her.

A flicker of annoyance tightened Cathryn’s expression. “We’re not a couple. Just give me the cake.”

The shop assistant packed the cake into a box and tilted her head. “Would you still like a lock?”

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A brief silence stretched as Cathryn considered. Lovers wished for eternity with those charms. But her marriage to Damien would end in a year—a lock would be pointless. “No, thank you,” she said quietly.

Liam’s lips curled with satisfaction as he leaned closer. “I knew it—you’re not pining for that old man. You still have feelings for me.” His voice softened, almost coaxing. “In my heart, we’re still husband and wife. I want us together, always.”

Revulsion prickled down Cathryn’s spine. Without a word, she snatched up the cake and stormed off.

Liam hurried to catch up, trailing close behind. “Cathryn, don’t forget—Olekkan Hotel, eighth floor, tonight.”

“Liam.” Jordyn’s voice cut through the air like a whip.

Liam froze and spun around, guilt flashing across his face.

Jordyn narrowed her eyes at the figure sliding into a car in the distance. Lines etched across her brow as tension gathered. “Who were you just talking to?”

His voice stumbled as Liam muttered, “Just a colleague from work.”

Jordyn’s gaze stayed fixed on the distant figure, doubt shadowing her eyes. That silhouette... it had looked far too much like Cathryn.

Liam handed her the box and said, “Here’s the cake you wanted.”

Jordyn’s face brightened, her mood lifting at once. “And the key for the lock?”

He pulled it from his pocket and handed it over.

Jordyn snuggled closer, beaming. “Liam, we’re like this lock—forever bound together.”

“Yeah,” he murmured distractedly, his thoughts already drifting to the evening he intended to spend with Cathryn.

Meanwhile, Cathryn climbed into her car in a huff, clutching the cake tightly.

In the driver's seat, Gavin cast a quick look out the window. "What's the hurry, Mrs. Brooks?"

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"Just drive," she instructed, her voice cool. Liam's smugness and shamelessness had left a sour taste in her mouth; she wanted to put distance between them as fast as possible.

Halfway home, Cathryn's phone rang. Jordyn's voice was sharp on the other end. "Cathryn, how dare you—still hanging around Liam, and bold enough to scribble both your names on the damn lock?"

Jordyn had barely stepped inside her home when her phone buzzed—two photos from Vanessa lighting up the screen. One showed Cathryn and Liam standing side by side in the bakery line. The other was a close-up of the heart-shaped lock engraved with their names.

Jordyn realized she hadn't been imagining things. The woman she'd glimpsed earlier really had been Cathryn. Fury surged through her. Cathryn had actually dared to seduce Liam.

Cathryn's reply snapped like a whip. "Instead of yelling at me, maybe keep a tighter leash on your man. He's the one who won't stop chasing me. That lock? Liam wrote it himself. I wouldn't waste a second glance on that pathetic fool."

Jordyn's voice rose to a cutting pitch. "Please. You're just bitter because he never loved you. He loathed you so much that he wouldn't touch you for three years—you were still a virgin when he divorced you. Why the hell would he suddenly be clinging to you now?"

A frosty chill settled over Cathryn's gaze. "And whose fault was that? You made sure he stayed out of my bed for three years."

If Jordyn had truly wanted Liam, she could have married him years ago. Instead, she'd slipped into his bed on Cathryn's wedding night. Making Cathryn miserable was the only thing that ever seemed to satisfy her.

Jordyn's triumphant laugh rang through the call. "Please. I didn't drag Liam into my bed—he came willingly. That proves I'm more charming than you. You lost, Cathryn."

Cathryn's gaze hardened, fury darkening her expression. Without replying, she ended the call and typed a message with steady fingers.

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"Jordyn, meet me tonight at Olekgan Hotel, Room 8011. The card is waiting for you at the front desk."

She sent it, disguising the message as though it had come from Liam.

Jordyn's pulse kicked with excitement when she saw it. Still, a flicker of doubt crossed her mind—why hadn't Liam simply handed her the room card himself?

The suspicion gnawed at her until she called the Olekgan Hotel front desk to confirm.

The receptionist replied politely, "Yes, Ms. Moore. Mr. Watson left a card for Room 8011 for you to collect."

Jordyn's smile returned, smug and certain. Liam must want to spice things up. It had been too long since he'd last had sex with her—tonight, he seemed intent on reigniting their old fire. Jordyn convinced herself that Cathryn was trying to seduce Liam, but he couldn't be bothered with her in the slightest.

Without wasting a second, Jordyn grabbed her phone and called Zoe. “Mom, take me to the spa. I need a full makeover—head to toe.”

Ever since getting that scar, Jordyn had obsessed over every inch of her appearance. She’d tried every treatment imaginable, even the most intimate ones, just to be ready for the day Liam came back to her. Now that a chance had finally appeared, she wasn’t about to let it slip through her fingers.

Once the message was sent, Cathryn stepped into her house.

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“Why did it take so long?” Andrew sat on the sofa, his face clouded with impatience.

She set the cake down gently on the table in front of him. “The line was long today.”

Andrew glanced at her. “Did you queue up yourself?”

“At first, Gavin was with me, but he twisted his ankle, so I was left alone,” she explained. She opened the box and held out a spoon. “Here’s the cake you wanted. Go on—see if you like it.”

Andrew ignored the spoon, his dark eyes fixed on her. “What about the lock?”

It wasn’t the cake he wanted. What he cared about was the lock with their names on it.

Cathryn caught the storm shadowing Damien’s face and swallowed the urge to bring up their one-year marriage contract. Better to steer him elsewhere. With feigned lightness, she said, “There were too many people. By the time it was my turn, all the love locks were gone.”

In Kathryn’s eyes, those silly charms—promising “forever together”—were little more than trinkets for daydreaming teenagers. What would a man like Damien ever want with one? And even if she had managed to secure one for them, would eternity really come bound with a padlock? If that were true, divorce lawyers would be out of business.

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She suspected he was brooding again, angling for a bit of indulgence. So she scooped up a spoonful of cake and held it to his lips, complaining, “Talk about bad luck—I ran into Liam, that disgusting man.”

A sharp flicker crossed Andrew’s eyes. “You just happened to run into him?”

Cathryn let out an exasperated huff. “It’s thanks to you. You just had to crave this particular cake. Who knew Liam would be there buying one for Jordyn? He practically glued himself to me.”

Relief softened the tight line of Andrew’s jaw. She’d brought it up on her own—good. He leaned forward and took the bite she offered.

“Well?” she asked, curious.

Mischief sparked in his gaze. “Come closer, and I’ll tell you.”

She leaned toward him, and his lips stole hers in a kiss sweetened with cream.

“Now?” he murmured against her mouth. “Do you think it’s good?”

Heat rushed from her cheeks down to her collarbones. She lowered her lashes, whispering, “Yeah.”

Margaret drawled from the kitchen doorway, “Well, looks like you really like that cake, Mrs. Brooks. You’ve got it smeared on the corner of your mouth.”

Margaret hadn’t seen the kiss—only the aftermath—assuming Cathryn had simply eaten sloppily.

Flustered, Cathryn reached for a napkin. Andrew beat her to it. “I’ll take care of it.”

Cathryn turned her face toward him, expecting the tissue. Instead, his lips brushed her skin, his tongue sweeping away the trace of cream.

“Oh heavens!” Margaret squeaked, clapping her hands over her eyes as she fled.

Cathryn shoved at his chest, her face blazing. “What do you think you’re doing?”

His gaze burned into hers, velvet-smooth and wicked. “Cake tastes even sweeter on your lips.”

She huffed. Hopeless flirt. How many times had he used that line on other women? “It’s gross,” she muttered.

Andrew furrowed his brows, realizing Cathryn could strangle romance with a single sentence.

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“You think I’m dirty?” He arched a brow, his voice low with teasing. “There’s not a single part of you I haven’t—”

She hastily clapped a hand over his mouth, eyes darting around. Thankfully, the nearby servants were busy, oblivious. “Damien, one more word and I’ll be furious.” Her voice trembled, fire sparking through the blush staining her cheeks.

He caught her hand and pressed a kiss to her fingers. “Alright, alright. I’ll shut up. From now on, pillow talk stays in the bedroom.”

“You’re still talking!” she snapped.

“Not another word.” He grinned, ruffling her hair. She blushed so easily. How was he supposed to lead her into all the wonders of intimacy?

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After dinner, Cathryn announced casually, “I need to step out for a bit.”

She intended to slip to the Olekgan Hotel, rig Liam’s room phone into a listening device, and enjoy the spectacle that would unfold. That secret, of course, Andrew must never learn—he’d leap to all the wrong conclusions.

His eyes narrowed. “Out this late? For what?”

Thinking quickly, she curved her lips into a shy smile. “Remember that tie I bought you? I left my bag at the shop. I need to get it.”

“Send Gavin,” Andrew countered without hesitation.

Her pulse quickened. She cleared her throat, cheeks warming. “No... there are private things inside. Not something I can have anyone else fetch.”

His brows lifted, a teasing glint in his eyes. “Private things?”

Cathryn faltered, her composure unraveling. “It’s... well...”

“Well?” Andrew pressed.

Her temper flared, and she blurted out, “The thing I told you to use last time—the one you didn’t!”

Andrew’s expression shifted as understanding dawned on him. Ah. Condoms. His gaze darkened as he leaned back against the sofa, his voice low and unreadable. “You don’t want to have my child?”

She met his stare head-on, her tone steady despite the storm churning inside. “We’re only supposed to stay married for a year. Do you really expect me to carry your child, just for you to keep the baby and cast me aside by then?”

For a long moment, silence settled between them. The sharp lines of Andrew’s face softened, his thoughts turning inward. When he had drawn up their agreement, she had been nothing more than a convenient solution—a pawn meant to fit neatly into his plans. Yet after more than two months under the same roof, the edges of that cold arrangement had begun to blur.

That night, he had been drunk, and she had appeared at his door, leading to everything that came after. It no longer felt like mere chance. Perhaps fate had slipped her into his life as an unexpected angel—one he found himself wanting not for a year, but for far longer.

She was still so young. Of course she didn’t want children yet. And she carried the weight of her family’s vendetta like a stone chained to her heart.

Andrew’s lips curved faintly, the steel in his gaze softening into something gentler. “Then we won’t have children if you don’t want to.”

Relief washed over Cathryn, though she hid it behind a mask of composure. Contraception wasn’t something she could manage alone—she needed his cooperation. The first two times, she had swallowed emergency pills in secret, her body paying the quiet price. But she’d already decided: if he refused to use protection again, she would never have sex with him.

She hadn't expected him to concede so easily. Or perhaps he had never truly wanted children with her at all. Perhaps she was nothing more than a fleeting indulgence, a distraction to warm his nights until the contract dissolved.

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Her chest tightened with a bitter pang. In this bargain, she wondered, who was gaining—and who was losing?

“Let Gavin drive you, and don’t take too long,” Andrew said, his tone soft but leaving no room for argument.

“It’s close. I can just grab a taxi,” Cathryn replied, brushing him off.

His voice turned stern. “No. After what happened with Jordyn, you’re not going anywhere alone. Take someone with you—always.”

Cathryn knew better than to argue. With a reluctant nod, she let Gavin escort her out. Still, a nagging suspicion twisted in her gut. Andrew’s insistence wasn’t only about safety—it felt more like surveillance. That meant she had to be more discreet.

She’d already mapped out her moves. Olekgan Mall was five minutes from the hotel. All she had to do was keep Gavin distracted for fifteen minutes.

When they pulled up to the mall, Cathryn glanced back and said to Gavin, “Just wait here. I’ll only be a minute.”

Gavin nodded. Lately, Andrew seemed less focused on strict oversight and more on her well-being. As a result, Gavin wasn’t hovering quite as much anymore. Deep down, he trusted Cathryn.

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Cathryn slipped into the pharmacy, bought a box of condoms, then pulled a cap low over her hair and tucked a mask over her face. Using the back entrance, she hailed a cab straight to the hotel.

Once inside the bustling lobby, she spotted a row of public computers. She walked up to the front desk and smiled. “Would I be able to use one of your computers?”

The receptionist greeted her politely. “Are you a guest at the hotel?”

Cathryn nodded smoothly. “I’m here to see Mr. Liam Watson—Room 8011. He’s expecting me.”

After a quick check, the receptionist gestured her forward. “Please, help yourself.”

Cathryn settled at a terminal, hands flying over the keyboard as she bypassed the standard login and cracked the administrator account. Within minutes, she’d slipped into the hotel’s internal system and activated the microphone on the phone in Room 8011.

One tap—and the phone by the bed became a live bug.

She routed the signal straight to her own phone. And just like that, her mission was done.

Cathryn was turning to leave when she nearly collided with Jordyn sweeping through the doors.

Jordyn looked like she'd stepped out of a glossy magazine—a tight designer dress hugging every curve, freshly styled waves cascading over her shoulders, her gaze smoldering with intention. Perched on stilettos that could double as weapons, she sashayed across the lobby with a confidence that demanded attention.

Cathryn kept her cap pulled low and brushed past without a word, slipping by unnoticed.

At the front desk, Jordyn flashed her brightest smile. “I’m here for the keycard Mr. Watson left—Room 8011.”

“Ms. Moore, correct?” the receptionist asked.

“That’s me,” Jordyn replied, her voice sweet with charm. Liam was playing a game with her—it seemed like he was finally coming around again.

Jordyn couldn’t resist snapping a quick selfie at the counter. She sent it to Cathryn with a message: “Liam invited me to the Olekgan Hotel. All your games are pointless—he’s always been mine, and nothing you do will ever change that.”

Standing just outside the hotel doors, Cathryn glanced at the gloating text, let out a cold snort, and slipped on her earbuds. The real show was about to start.

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Inside, the receptionist handed over the keycard, and Jordyn sauntered toward the elevators, hips swaying with every step. Naughty Liam—he could have just handed her the card himself, but no, he had to set the stage and play his little games. She giggled softly, already imagining his reaction.

Upstairs, in the plush suite of Room 8011, water thundered in the shower. Liam hummed under the hot spray, feeling smug.

These days, even looking at Jordyn made his skin crawl. He'd entertained the idea of messing around with someone else, but the risks weren't worth it—scandal, disease,

drama. None of it appealed. And Cathryn haunted his every thought. Day and night, waking and dreaming, she was the only woman he wanted. His fantasies always ended the same: her, tangled in his sheets, breathless and his.

And now, unbelievably, his wish was about to come true. He'd actually managed to invite her here. He'd expected her to be a challenge, to play hard to get. Yet she was coming to him now, and it felt almost too easy.

There could be only one explanation—Cathryn was still hooked on him.

The thought thrilled him: with just a snap of his fingers, she'd come running, desperate to end up in his bed.

He'd been craving her for too long, pent up and ready to explode. Tonight, he'd take everything he wanted. He'd show her that the washed-up old man she'd married was nothing—that only he could leave her breathless and wanting more.

Liam was deep in his fantasies when the suite door beeped and swung open.

Jordyn glided inside. Hearing the water pounding in the shower, she smiled to herself. So impatient—Liam couldn't even wait for her to arrive.

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While Liam lingered beneath the spray, Jordyn quickly changed into her new lingerie: black lace, seductive and just sheer enough to distract from the scar at her neck. She checked herself in the mirror, making sure the lights were dim enough to hide the flaw, then slipped beneath the covers, cocooned in soft blankets, her heart fluttering with anticipation.

Minutes later, Liam stepped out of the bathroom with a towel around his waist. He assumed Cathryn hadn't arrived yet. He poured himself a drink and strolled into the bedroom—then stopped short when he spotted the mound beneath the covers.

A slow, hungry grin spread across his lips. "You got here faster than I expected."

His eyes caught on the dress and stockings tossed over the sofa, and heat surged through his veins. So desperate—she'd stripped in a hurry before crawling into bed.

He set his glass aside, rubbing his hands together as he sat on the edge of the mattress. With slow deliberation, he traced the shape hidden beneath the blanket, his fingertips gliding down.

"I was blind before—fooled by that wretch and too stupid to see you. But that's over. From now on, I'll cherish you. I'll make it up to you."

Beneath the covers, Jordyn's lips curled into a self-satisfied smirk. Good. He'd finally realized Cathryn had been fooling him all along.

“If it weren’t for that bitch, you and I would’ve been a loving couple three years ago. We wouldn’t have had to go through any of this,” Liam said. The mere thought of Jordyn made his blood boil with fury.

Assuming he was talking about Cathryn, Jordyn—trembling with unsteady emotion—reached out and laced her fingers through his.

Still believing it was Cathryn beneath the sheets, the warmth of her touch ignited something dangerous in him—an itch he’d been dying to scratch, a hunger he could barely keep leashed. Desire coiled tight in his chest; he wanted nothing more than to pin Cathryn beneath him right then. But he forced it down, needing to explain himself.

“Three years ago, it was she who forced her way into my bed. She clung to me and wouldn’t let go, and I wasted three years of my life on her. I’ve long since grown sick of her.”

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A chill slid down Jordyn's spine. His words didn't feel right.

Liam tightened his grip on her hand, his thumb grazing her knuckles with longing as his voice thickened with lust. "Compared to you, that bitch Jordyn is nothing. She couldn't hold a candle to you."

Jordyn's heart lurched as if struck by lightning. That "bitch" he meant—was her. Her breath caught in her throat. Who did he think she was?

"Cathryn," Liam whispered, almost feverish, "my body, my heart, every piece of me belongs to you—if you'll just come back to me."

Unable to hold back any longer, he yanked the sheets aside and crushed his lips against hers.

His desperation poured into two hurried, frantic kisses—until something jarred him. He pulled back, stunned.

Jordyn's face stared back at him.

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As if he'd seen a ghost, Liam recoiled violently, stumbling off the bed and sprawling onto the floor.

Jordyn's vision blurred with tears. "The woman you wanted tonight... it was Cathryn, wasn't it?"

Panic was written across Liam's face. Unease chained his gaze to the floor. "Don't—don't talk nonsense..."

"I heard everything!" Jordyn's voice cracked, raw with betrayal. "You called me a bitch! You were calling out Cathryn's name!" Her chest heaved as sobs wracked her body.

Snatching up her phone, she dialed Zoe with trembling fingers. Between gasps and tears, she accused him of cheating with Cathryn.

Zoe's fury flared through the receiver. "I'll be right there. He won't get away with this."

Zoe's anger, however, was quickly tempered by something else. Liam's unfaithfulness had handed her the perfect weapon, and she intended to use it—ensuring his loyalty to Jordyn from this moment on.

Zoe rallied her circle of wealthy socialites and marched over, determined to back Jordyn up and confront Liam together.

When Jordyn hung up, her reflection in the mirror caught her eye. The revealing lingerie clinging to her body suddenly felt like a cruel joke—a costume for someone else's play. Rage surged. She lunged at Liam, clawing and striking, each blow fueled by heartbreak.

“You bastard! We've been married for barely a month, and you're already betraying me? How dare you treat me this way?”

By the time Zoe arrived at the doorway, Liam's face was a mess of angry red scratches, courtesy of Jordyn's fury—his pride shredded along with his skin.

Still wrapped in that revealing lingerie, Jordyn collapsed into Zoe's arms, sobbing uncontrollably. “Liam's cheating—with that bitch Cathryn...”

Jordyn didn't notice Zoe slipping in with a cluster of wealthy women at her heels. Lost in her own breakdown, she wailed loudly enough for her misery to spill into the corridor.

Zoe froze at the doorway, Jordyn crying in her arms. The suite door remained wide open. Curious hotel guests peeked in, their faces pinched with disdain at the sight of a scantily clad woman unraveling in the room.

“Look at her—parading around in scraps of silk. Must be some mistress trying to snatch a husband.”

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“Disgraceful. Utterly shameless.”

Even the socialites Zoe had dragged along exchanged uncomfortable, disdainful looks. The air turned thick with embarrassment. One of them huffed, her voice iced with contempt. “This is your family’s business. We’ll keep our distance.”

Their heels clicked toward the elevator in a hurried retreat.

As the elevator doors slid shut, their judgment spilled out in venomous whispers. “Did you see that lingerie? What decent woman dresses like that? She looked exactly like a courtesan.”

“Courtesan? You’re being generous. She looked like a common whore.”

These socialites wore their noble lineage like armor, boasting of households that would never allow such indecency—not even behind locked bedroom doors.

Another let out a bitter laugh. “Zoe swore Cathryn cheated first, and that Jordyn and Liam only came together afterward. But after tonight? That tale reeks of lies. Best keep the Moores at arm’s length, before their scandal splashes onto us.”

Agreement rippled through them as the elevator whisked them away.

Meanwhile, in the hotel room, Zoe’s fury simmered. She hadn’t expected her daughter to humiliate her like this—not in front of the wealthy friends she’d worked so hard to impress. Shoving Jordyn back into the room, she slammed the door behind her. “Enough tears. Look at yourself! Have you no shame?”

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Jordyn froze, glancing down at the lingerie still clinging to her body. Her face drained of color. She'd been so busy clawing at Liam that she'd forgotten to change back into her clothes. A strangled cry tore from her throat as she fled into the bathroom. If anyone had seen her like this, she'd never live it down. Humiliation curdled into fury, and she spat Cathryn's name like a curse.

Zoe snatched a hanger and lashed at Liam. "You've been married mere weeks, and already you stray? How could you—"

Her words cut off with a gasp as Liam, driven to the edge, shoved her violently to the floor. His roar shook the walls. "So what if I stray? If not for my wandering, would Jordyn even wear the Watson name now? If I'd stayed faithful, Cathryn would still be my wife—and we'd be happy!"

The bathroom door creaked open. Jordyn appeared, her face drained to a ghostly white. "What did you just say?"

Liam stabbed a finger at her, rage sparking in his eyes. "Divorce. I want a divorce."

Jordyn's body trembled. Divorce? She'd finally clawed her way into this marriage after waiting three years, and with Watson Tech on the cusp of going public, she couldn't lose everything now. She wouldn't.

Even Zoe's cheeks blanched, panic stealing her voice. But Liam was already gone, the slam of the door echoing in his wake.

In the sleek back seat of the Maybach, Cathryn lounged with her earbuds in, laughter bubbling up until it shook her. Hearing those three tear each other apart—ah, it was sweeter than wine. She only wished she could've seen Jordyn's face when Liam demanded a divorce. That moment had to be priceless.

At last, Jordyn knew the taste of betrayal—of being tossed aside like refuse.

Before stepping through the threshold, Cathryn's smile cooled into a mask of serenity. She slipped out her earbuds and walked in as if she were returning from nothing more than a simple errand.

Andrew was still on the sofa. His gaze lifted to her the instant she entered. "What kept you so long?"

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His tone was mild, yet it made her pulse stutter. A quick glance at the clock steadied her. Barely half an hour had passed—nothing unusual.

“The shop was closed. I waited around a bit,” she lied smoothly.

His lips curved, a hint of amusement flickering there. He extended his hand toward her, palm open, waiting. “Come here.”

Cathryn inched closer, slipping her small hand into Damien’s broad palm.

His thumb brushed lazily over her fingers, and a sly smile tugged at his lips. “Good girl.”

With an effortless pull, he drew her onto his lap, burying his face in the curve of her neck. His voice, low and husky, thrummed against her skin. “Where is it?”

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She blinked, confused. “What?” Her shoulders twitched as his hair tickled her cheek.

“The thing that keeps you from getting pregnant...” His breath scorched her neck, his words thick with hunger.

Cathryn flushed, twisting away. “Why is your head always filled with that?”

“Is that a crime?” His teeth caught her collar, tugging the fabric down in a teasing way.

She gasped, clutching the neckline in mortified defense. “I only agreed to have sex with you three times.”

Three times for the thirty million she’d borrowed from him.

Andrew lifted his head. His eyes darkened, his expression bruised with hurt. “Heartless little thing. After everything I’ve done for you, you’re really going to keep count?”

Her heart faltered. She hadn't meant to sound so calculating. Otherwise, she never would have let him move back into the master bedroom. Besides, desire tugged at her in ways she refused to admit. There were nights when she ached for his touch as much as he craved hers. But his appetite was insatiable. Even injured, he never relented, and she was beginning to feel overwhelmed.

He tilted his head, mischief glinting at the corner of his mouth. "Three times for thirty million... but what about the interest?"

Cathryn frowned, wary. "Interest?"

His fingers pinched her waist, making her shiver. "That money was a loan, not a gift. Loans collect interest. Every day you don't repay me..." His lips curved wickedly. "I'll collect my interest here."

Her stomach sank. She'd walked right into his trap.

"Why don't you just give in?" His teeth brushed her neck, a...

...a teasing scrape that sent sparks dancing over her skin. "Debts can be settled later."

Heat flooded her veins, stealing the strength from her body. Her limbs went weak, melting against him.

Andrew pressed her into the cushions, catching the delicate strap of her lingerie between his teeth with a sharp tug.

Cathryn smothered a gasp behind her hand. “Not here—someone might see.”

She could picture servants moving in and out of the living room and the yard.

But Gavin had already sensed the shift in the air. With a flick of his wrist, he dismissed the staff and drew the doors closed. Silence followed—thick and expectant.

Andrew yanked Cathryn’s top away and buried his face against her chest.

The cool air against her exposed skin made her shiver; she leaned into him almost without thinking.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 131:

He paused—only for a heartbeat—before his hand slid boldly beneath her skirt. His voice dropped, urgent and heated. “Where’s the condom?”

Her cheeks burned. “Don’t—don’t say it like that.” The word lodged in her throat, too raw, too embarrassing.

A low chuckle rumbled in his chest. “Shy little thing. How’d you even get them?”

Her reply was a whisper, barely more than a breath. “From a vending machine.”

She never would have dared otherwise, but tonight she’d needed the excuse to get out.

Andrew’s throat worked, his expression softening. “My mistake. I should’ve taken care of it.”

They went at it all the way from the living room into the bedroom.

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Later, Andrew draped an arm across her shoulders, his chest still heaving. His tone was casual, almost teasing. “You didn’t buy enough condoms.”

Cathryn didn’t know much about those things—she’d simply grabbed a box without thinking. Five was all it held. He’d exhausted them before dawn.

“You have no restraint,” she scolded, pinching his chest. “You’re not even healed and you’re indulging—didn’t the doctor warn you?”

He swept a strand of hair behind her ear, stroking her smooth cheek. “I heal faster once I have sex with you.”

She huffed, rolling her eyes. “That’s the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard.”

“Ask the doctor.” His grin turned wicked. “He’d call it therapeutic.”

“Only you could twist it like that,” she muttered.

Andrew laughed and kissed her soft lips. “I don’t know why, but I crave you. I want you undone—want to hear you cry with pleasure.”

Cathryn buried her face in the pillow, crimson ears peeking out.

Andrew’s hunger never waned, and he was skilled. Again and again, he pulled Cathryn back beneath him, coaxing trembling pleas from her lips. Her protests only fed the fire.

Soon, tears slipped down her flushed cheeks—tears that mingled pain with aching pleasure.

Bending low, his mouth at her ear, he whispered, “Feels good, doesn’t it?”

Embarrassment warred with desire. She pushed weakly against him, desperate to escape the intensity.

His smile was dark, triumphant. “I’ll make you feel this way every day.”

“Who wants to do it every day with you?” she snapped through ragged breaths, shoving at his chest.

He caught her wrist, eyes glittering. “We’re married. It’s your duty.”

Back when she’d signed that prenup, she hadn’t realized the fine print would chain her like this.

While Andrew claimed Cathryn with relentless devotion, across town Jordyn collapsed on a hotel bed, tears smearing her mascara. “Liam actually wants a divorce because of Cathryn?” Her sobs shook the room. Hatred twisted her features. “I’ll ruin her—I swear I’ll ruin her!”

Zoe’s face twisted with frustration. “Who would have guessed Cathryn could be so cunning?”

In Zoe’s mind, Cathryn had outmaneuvered them. She had first lured Liam in, then staged the entire scene so Jordyn would hear him whisper words meant for Cathryn’s ears—all while ensuring those wealthy ladies witnessed Jordyn’s mortification.

Jordyn stomped her heel, humiliated. “Mom, why did you invite all those wealthy ladies? Now everyone’s laughing at me!”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 132:

She'd dressed in that revealing lingerie for Liam's eyes alone, but instead of arousing him, she'd been caught weeping in it—right in front of those affluent women. The thought of their gossip made her skin crawl.

Zoe explained, laying out her logic. “The Watsons still haven't mentioned organizing a wedding for you and Liam. I wanted the city's socialites there to pressure Liam into giving you a proper ceremony.”

Jordyn bit her lip, her pride aching. She had the marriage certificate, but in everyone's eyes, Cathryn was still Liam's wife. Whenever Jordyn went out with Liam, it still felt like they were having an affair. But if Liam held a grand wedding with her, the world would finally see her as Mrs. Watson.

Jordyn's eyes hardened. “Since we can't get rid of Cathryn ourselves, we need help from someone with real power.”

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Zoe nodded, lowering her voice conspiratorially. “It seems we can only turn to Jorge’s wife, Cara.”

Jordyn looked at her hopefully. “But can you even reach her?” The Moores had money, but they were nothing compared to the Brooks family in Olekhan. Getting close to Cara would be almost impossible.

Zoe had met Cara a handful of times at social events—enough to recognize her across a room, but not much more.

“Luck’s on our side,” Zoe said. “I tracked down Cara’s number. She hung up when I introduced myself, but I called again and told her my eldest daughter, Cathryn, married the Brooks’ butler and is throwing her weight around using Andrew’s name. That caught her attention—she agreed to meet me.”

Jordyn’s eyes shone through her tears. “Cara wants to meet you? That’s fantastic. You have to embellish the story. Make sure she knows just how scheming Cathryn can be.”

Zoe nodded firmly. “I’ll call her now.”

The plan was simple: have Cara fire the butler, leaving Cathryn and her husband with nowhere to go but the streets.

Jordyn relished the thought of Cathryn reduced to begging on the streets with an old man and couldn't help but laugh. With the Brooks family's intervention, Cathryn was doomed.

The next morning, Cathryn woke to find the sun already high in the sky. Every muscle in her back ached, as if she'd been put through a grinder.

Downstairs, Andrew instructed Margaret, "Don't wake Cathryn—let her rest. Keep her breakfast warm."

Margaret nodded with a knowing smile. "Absolutely."

Andrew turned to the rest of the staff. "Move quietly. I don't want any noise near her room."

The servants tiptoed about, voices lowered to whispers. "Yes, Mr. Brooks."

When Cathryn finally appeared in the hallway, Margaret greeted her with an especially bright smile. "Good morning, Mrs. Brooks!"

Cathryn jolted. Was it her imagination, or were the staff sneaking glances her way—paired with knowing smiles? She shot Damien a look that could kill. Did he really have to broadcast what happened last night?

Then her gaze dropped to his neck, and she froze.

He was in a sharp black suit, his white shirt crisp as fresh snow, his entire look polished and commanding. But it was the tie that stole her breath—the very one she’d gifted him.

Seeing it dragged back memories of that night: the tie binding her wrists, the way he’d pinned her beneath him. Sweat, whispered pleas—everything tangled in that strip of cloth. And now here he was, striding around in broad daylight with that tie as if nothing had happened.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 133:

Her face flamed.

Scarlet, Cathryn blurted out, “That tie clashes with your suit. You should pick another one.”

Gavin eyed the tie, noting how out of place it looked against Andrew’s sharp suit. He turned to Margaret. “Why don’t you grab one of Mr. Brooks’s usual ties? Mrs. Brooks is right—this one doesn’t quite fit.”

Before Margaret could move, Andrew pressed a hand protectively over the tie and met Cathryn’s gaze, his eyes soft. “I’m keeping this one. I want to wear it every day.”

Gavin understood at once—this wasn’t an ordinary tie. It was a gift from Cathryn. He nodded and waved Margaret off. “Mr. Brooks, let me help you fix it.”

“I’ll do it,” Cathryn said quickly, stepping in. No way was she letting anyone else touch that tie—not after that night.

Andrew opened his arms to her, smiling. He bent slightly so she could reach, looking utterly content as she straightened the knot.

“It’s a good tie,” he murmured. “Makes me look respectable by day. At night, well...”

Cathryn swatted his chest, cheeks burning. “That’s enough out of you.”

He leaned in, his voice warm and low against her ear. “Let’s try something new with it tonight.”

Mortified, Cathryn shot back, “Maybe I’ll tie you up for a change.”

Andrew grinned, far too pleased by the idea. “Go ahead. I’ll let you take charge...”

Shocked, Cathryn clapped a hand over his mouth, wide-eyed. How could he be this shameless—flirting with her in front of everyone?

Andrew kissed her palm gently. “I’ll be home early,” he promised.

Cathryn stood there, blushing, watching him leave for work. Maybe it was his skill in bed, or the way their bodies fit so perfectly together—whatever it was, she found herself wanting more of him. If only he could temper that endless hunger of his.

Still, she couldn't deny she loved his gentle dominance, the way he cared for her—both rough and tender.

Cathryn caught herself smiling, a quiet thought settling in her chest: maybe fortune was finally favoring her.

Margaret couldn't help noticing the rosy flush on Cathryn's cheeks—a glow that only came from being cherished. With a knowing smile, she said, “Mrs. Brooks, you and your husband really do make the sweetest couple.”

Cathryn laughed, her cheeks turning even pinker. “Don't tease me, Margaret,” she replied, darting back to her bedroom.

Cathryn flopped onto the bed. The faint scent of Damien lingered on the sheets, wrapping her in warmth. Burying her face in the covers, she let herself bask in that rare, fragile feeling of happiness.

Elsewhere, Zoe's voice sparkled over the phone as she called Jordyn. “I met with Cara today. I told her everything—how Cathryn always has her husband chauffeuring the Brooks' car and is finding ways to cozy up to Andrew. Cara promised she'd look into it, and if all the claims are true, she'll make sure Cathryn faces consequences.”

Relief rushed through Jordyn. She'd always believed the Brooks family was out of reach, yet her mother had managed to reach Andrew's formidable stepmother.

For a moment, Jordyn's mind wandered. If Andrew had never been disfigured, would there have been a chance for her to become his wife? Being called Mrs. Brooks carried far more weight and status than anything the name Mrs. Watson could offer.

Now Jordyn understood why Vanessa still wanted Andrew, disfigured and crippled. Marrying into the Brooks family meant unrivaled status at the very top of Olekgan society.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 134:

If Vanessa managed to become Mrs. Brooks, Jordyn realized she would have to curry favor with her.

The thought left Jordyn unsettled. She resolved that not only could she not divorce Liam, but she needed Watson Tech to go public—lifting the Watson family high enough to rival even the Brooks.

With Kestrel nowhere to be found, it was time to devise another plan.

Meanwhile, Cathryn sat on her bed, sketching the “Midnight Lilies” painting when her phone lit up with a call from an unknown number.

“Hello? Is this Cathryn Moore?” a woman’s voice asked.

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Cathryn’s guard shot up. “Who’s asking?” She wondered if Jordyn was trying another trick.

“This is Cara, Jorge’s wife,” the woman answered, her tone sharp and direct.

Cathryn's breath caught for a moment. Jorge's wife—Damien's stepmother—was calling her? She remembered the rumors. Jorge had divorced years ago and later married a rising actress, someone twenty years younger. Now, at forty-three, Cara was still strikingly youthful—and the real power behind the Brooks name.

“Could we meet?” Cara suggested.

Cathryn hesitated only a second before answering, “Alright.”

Cathryn had done her homework. Andrew might be CEO in name, but Cara kept a firm grip on the Brooks Group, especially with Andrew away so often. Damien was an illegitimate child, and Cara had been his stepmother in every sense that mattered—at least publicly.

Her marriage to Damien had been kept under wraps, but now that his stepmother had apparently caught wind of it, Cathryn knew she couldn't act nervous or evasive. She didn't know what history Damien shared with Cara, or what Cara wanted from her. Still, curiosity won out.

She claimed she was going out for a stroll, then hailed a cab to the café Cara had chosen. Once inside, Cathryn scanned the room and spotted a woman by the window, sipping coffee at her leisure.

Cathryn approached carefully, taking in the woman's surprisingly youthful appearance. Her hair was perfectly arranged, her neck elegant, her posture effortlessly poised. At a glance, her face seemed untouched by age—though a closer look revealed faint lines at the corners of her eyes that surfaced when she smiled.

“Ms. Moore, I presume?” Cara’s tone was friendly, but there was something unreadable in her gaze.

“Yes. I’m Cathryn,” she replied quietly.

Cara’s eyes lingered on her, quietly assessing. “I attended your wedding to the Watson boy. Such beauty, wasted on Liam—who would’ve guessed you’d end up marrying into the Brooks family instead?”

Cathryn fiddled with her fingers, uncertain whether Cara was genuinely friendly. Cara’s words glittered on the surface, yet there was a sting beneath.

“Do you have any idea who you married?” Cara asked, her tone sharpening.

Baffled by the question, Cathryn answered simply, “Damien.”

Cara’s brows lifted, her interest clearly piqued. It was obvious now—Andrew had done an excellent job hiding his true identity.

Cara had believed Andrew was still overseas, at least until persistent whispers of his return began drifting through Olekgan’s social circles. She’d dismissed the gossip, until Zoe showed up spinning stories about Gavin supposedly marrying Cathryn and using

Andrew's name to open doors. Gavin—the most cautious servant in the Brooks family—would never take such a risk unless it was under Andrew's command.

Cara decided to dig deeper and set a discreet investigation in motion, only to uncover the truth: Andrew was not only back in town, but had quietly married a woman named Cathryn—going by the name Damien to keep the marriage hidden.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 135:

What stuck with Cara was Cathryn's past. Liam's ex-wife, newly divorced, was hardly the match anyone expected for Andrew. Andrew was proud and notoriously hard to please—why settle for a divorced woman?

There could be only one explanation: the rumors of Andrew's disfigurement had to be true. It made sense, then, for him to marry outside the usual circles.

That eased Cara's worries. The Brooks Group would never allow a scarred heir to become the family's future.

Putting her thoughts aside, Cara gestured to the chair across from her. "Have a seat."

Cathryn slid into it, careful and composed.

"How is Damien's health these days?" Cara asked, mild curiosity in her tone.

"He's doing well," Kathryn replied evenly.

Cara studied her, her smile polite but edged. "It can't be easy for you, being with him."

Cathryn shook her head without missing a beat. "It's not hard at all."

She assumed Cara meant social status—Damien, the illegitimate son, and her, raised as the Moores' heiress. In Kathryn's eyes, Damien carried himself with a quiet nobility she'd never managed.

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Cara's smile lingered, thoughtful. For years, she'd tried to plant someone close to Andrew, but he always kept his guard up around her. Since Cathryn had managed to secure a place in his world, perhaps she could serve as Cara's eyes and ears. It would save her the trouble of dispatching others.

"I recently had someone bring this bag back from overseas. It's a limited edition, and I want you to have it as a gift for our first meeting." Cara pulled out a white Hermès bag made of crocodile leather and extended it to Cathryn.

Cathryn hurriedly waved her hands, shaking her head. "Thank you, but that's too much. I really can't accept something so expensive."

Cara rose, walked over to her, and slid the bag neatly under Cathryn's arm. "You're part of the Brooks family now, and carrying a designer bag is expected."

Cathryn glanced down and said softly, "I don't really belong to the Brooks family. Damien... he's only half a Brooks." She still believed her husband was merely an illegitimate child.

Cara smiled and reached for Cathryn's hand. "Family is about blood. Damien counts—and so do you, since you married him."

Some of Cathryn's tension eased. Cara didn't seem as hard to approach as she'd first feared.

Cara draped an arm over Cathryn's shoulder. "From now on, you're under my protection. No one will bother you."

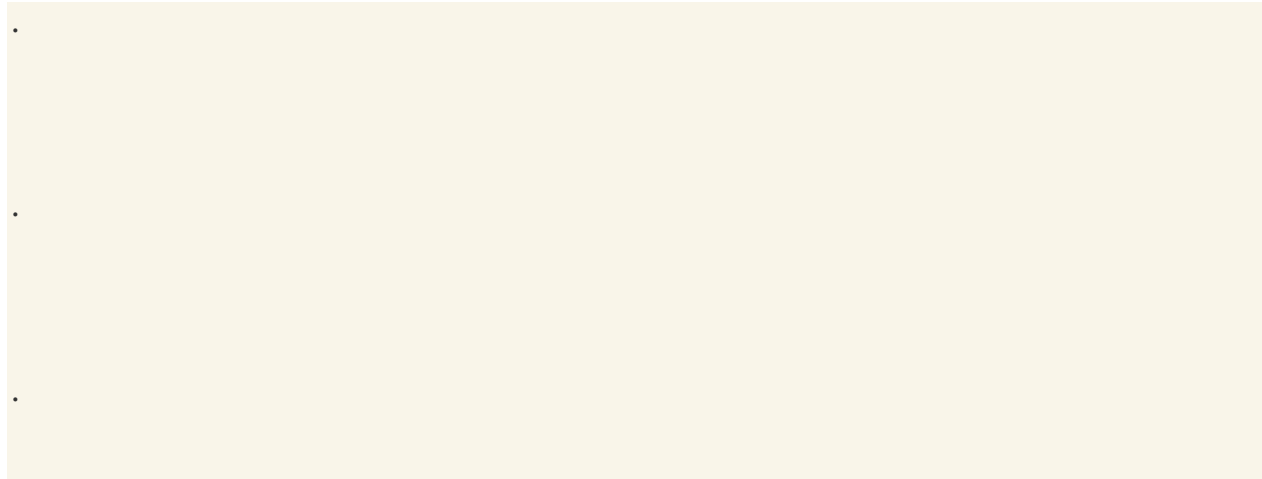
Cathryn was mildly surprised. She'd braced herself for an aloof mother-in-law, but acceptance came far too easily.

Cara sat back down and let out a long breath. "I'm not Damien's birth mother. He's always kept his distance. He hasn't set foot in the family house for years—just wanders everywhere. It's quite heartbreaking."

Cathryn blinked, stunned. "He hasn't been home for years?"

Cara nodded. "After Damien was born, his mother took him to live in another house. When he turned three, she left him behind to be raised by someone else. The nanny in charge barely cared. When I finally went to pick him up, he was severely undernourished. For years, Damien blamed me for taking his father, so he refused to come home. But if I hadn't brought him back then... he might not have survived at all."

A wave of emotion hit Cathryn.



Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 136:

Jordyn, born outside of marriage, had Richard doting on her—showering her with affection and giving her a home, even without official status.

Meanwhile, Cathryn, the Moore family's legitimate daughter, had always felt like a stranger in her own house. Despite sharing the same label as "illegitimate" in the eyes of others, Damien's hardships made Jordyn's life look easy by comparison.

Cathryn let out a quiet, self-mocking laugh. She—the Moore family's legitimate daughter—and Damien—the Brooks family's illegitimate son—shared the same kind of fate.

Cara spoke softly. “When I married Jorge, I couldn’t help but feel for Damien, losing his mother so young. I brought him to live with us and tried to give him all the care I could. For the first seven years of my marriage, I put off having my own child because I wanted him to feel he belonged.”

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Only then did it click for Cathryn. Cara had been married to Jorge for twenty-five years, yet their son was only eighteen. She had waited all those years—just for Damien’s sake.

“But no matter how much effort I put in, Damien never warmed up to me.” Cara’s voice softened with old hurt. “It broke my heart, so eventually I decided to have Nick.”

Cathryn was stunned. Compared to Zoe—who hadn’t hesitated to hand Richard a whip to hurt her—Cara had acted with a conscience, something rare in a stepmother.

Reaching across the table, Cara gently clasped Cathryn’s hand, her gaze earnest. “Damien has always stood on his own. I know he would never choose the wrong person. Could you help me convince him to come home?”

Cathryn eased her hand back. “That’s really up to Damien. I respect his choice.” This was a Brooks family matter, and she was only tied to Damien through a one-year marriage.

With a weary smile, Cara said, “One of my sons is thousands of miles away, and the other refuses to come home. Maybe it’s just my fate.”

Cathryn tried to reassure her. “Damien isn’t cold-hearted. If you show him kindness, he’ll come around one day.”

A flicker of hope lit Cara’s eyes. “I hope so.” She nodded, her smile settling back into place.

They finished their coffee in silence.

Cara stood. “Please don’t mention that I visited you today. Damien would only get upset, and it would worsen my relationship with him.”

Cathryn agreed. “I won’t say a word.” Getting involved wasn’t something she wanted anyway.

“Would you walk me out?” Cara asked, her tone lighter.

“Of course.” Cathryn rose and followed her outside.

Just beyond the café, Jordyn and Zoe waited in the car, watching the entrance.

Zoe let out a snicker. “Who would’ve thought Cathryn could get Mrs. Brooks to ask her out?”

Jordyn shot her a sideways glance. “Mrs. Brooks cares more about the family name than anything else. She’ll find a way to make Cathryn pay. Just wait—Cathryn will end up with a coffee stain on her face.”

They expected a scene—maybe even a dramatic spill. Instead, laughter and easy conversation drifted out as Cathryn and Cara left the café together.

Outside, Cathryn tried once more to hand the bag back. “I really can’t keep this. It’s too valuable.”

Designer bags didn’t appeal much to Cathryn, but she recognized luxury when she saw it.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 137:

Cara brushed aside her hesitation, nudging the bag right back under her arm. “You belong to the Brooks family now. A proper bag is the least you should have. Take it, or you’ll make me look bad.”

Uncertainty flickered across Cathryn’s face. She knew Damien and Cara had never gotten along, so keeping her distance felt like the safest choice.

With a soft smile, Cara reached over and patted Cathryn’s head. “You know, if Damien would just let me, I’d have given you my blessing in person. Since he keeps his distance, inviting you out was the next best thing.”

A quiet sigh escaped Cathryn. “I appreciate your generosity.”

With Cara speaking like this, Cathryn knew she had to accept the gift. Still, she resolved that, in time, she would find a way to return it.

Cara’s expression softened once Cathryn agreed. “I really find you adorable. Can I get a hug?”

Cathryn stepped forward and gave her a gentle hug.

Unbeknownst to them, a camera clicked from across the parking lot.

Watching from the car, Zoe's jaw dropped. "Did you see that? Mrs. Brooks actually hugged Cathryn."

Irritation flared in Jordyn's eyes as she fixated on the bag. "Mrs. Brooks didn't just hug her. She handed over that impossibly rare Hermès bag."

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Zoe's gaze locked onto the white Hermès in Cathryn's hand. For months, that exact bag had been the talk of the elite. No one could get their hands on one—except, apparently, for Jorge's wife, who'd managed to snag it overseas. Half a million dollars, a waitlist stretching half a year—and somehow Cathryn ended up with it just like that.

"I thought you said Cara was supposed to put Cathryn in her place. So why is Cara suddenly acting friendly with her?" Jordyn asked, shooting Zoe a frustrated look.

Zoe's expression flickered with confusion. She'd assumed Cara was digging up dirt on Cathryn—asking nonstop questions, as if she were trying to uncover something. But when Cara and Cathryn finally met, they'd acted like old friends.

Trying to soothe her daughter, Zoe said, "Don't get worked up just yet. Cara isn't easy to deal with. She's always several steps ahead—maybe this is just groundwork for something bigger."

Jordyn clenched her fists, barely containing her anger. "What if Cathryn latches onto Cara now? I don't get it. Cathryn has this weird way of making everyone fall under her spell. No matter where she goes, people end up siding with her."

"She's fooled them all with her little act," Zoe muttered, resentment dripping from every word. "That's exactly why we need to bring her down."

Jordyn's voice sharpened. "Bring her down? We haven't even managed to dig up any dirt on her. If anything, Cara just gifted her a designer bag!"

Envy flared between them at the mention of the bag.

Just then, Zoe's phone rang. Cara's name flashed on the screen. Zoe answered immediately, her voice turning syrupy. "Hello, Mrs. Brooks."

On the other end, Cara spoke in her usual calm, blunt manner. "Do you have Cathryn's bank account details?"

Zoe stiffened, then answered, “Yes, I do.”

“Send them to me,” Cara instructed.

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Chapter 138:

Zoe’s brow furrowed. “You’re transferring money to her? Why would you do that?”

“Cathryn is valuable to me. That’s all you need to know,” Cara replied, and ended the call without another word.

Zoe set her phone down, a sly smile creeping onto her lips. “There. You heard it yourself—Mrs. Brooks knows exactly what she’s doing. This is all part of her plan.”

Jordyn frowned, irritation sharpening her features. “But Cathryn’s just the butler’s wife. What use could she possibly be to someone like Cara?”

Zoe replied, “You have no idea how things work in families like the Brooks. The butler practically runs the house—and he’s the keeper of every secret.”

Jordyn let out a derisive snort. “Still nothing more than a servant, though.”

“That’s right,” Zoe agreed with a nod. “Cathryn can’t compare to you. You’re Mrs. Watson now, and she’ll never be on your level.”

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Jordyn glanced at Cathryn’s back and sneered. “Doesn’t change a thing, even if she’s got an expensive bag. She’s still beneath us.”

Once home, Cathryn quietly tucked the designer bag into the back of her closet, making sure Damien wouldn't stumble upon it. She couldn't outright reject Cara's generosity, but she also couldn't let Damien see it. Hiding it felt like the only solution.

Later, when Andrew came home, he immediately asked, "Where's Cathryn?"

Margaret smiled. "She's in the bedroom."

Without hesitation, Andrew slipped off his jacket and headed straight in. Cathryn, focused on her painting, was bent over the canvas, brush in hand. He came up behind her, wrapped his arms around her waist, and whispered, "You look incredibly stunning when you're working on your art."

She squirmed in protest. "Knock it off. You're messing up my painting."

Where she'd meant to paint a blue flower, a streak of green had smeared across the canvas.

Andrew took the brush from her hand, grinning. "Easy fix. We'll just turn that into a leaf." He bent closer and, with careful strokes, painted one in.

"You just ruined a masterpiece, you know," Cathryn teased.

He set the brush aside and pulled her into a kiss. “To me, anything you create is more precious than a Louis Marquet. Could I have this one?”

Cathryn pouted. “Nah. This one’s already spoken for.”

She’d already decided to give it to Cara as repayment for the bag—then draw a line so they wouldn’t have to meet again.

A sly grin surfaced on Andrew’s lips. “Let me guess. For Andrew again?”

“Don’t start guessing nonsense,” she said evasively.

His only response was a smile. One way or another, he’d end up with it.

Andrew settled into a chair and pulled her onto his lap, the rough brush of his stubble grazing her neck. “Did you miss me today?”

She nuzzled into his chest and answered softly, “I did...”

He couldn’t resist teasing, squeezing her waist gently. “Be honest. What part of you missed me the most?”

Twisting away, Cathryn answered with a bashful smile, “That would be my heart.”

That didn’t satisfy him. His fingers slipped lower, brushing along her thigh beneath her skirt. “Are you sure it’s just your heart?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 139:

Cathryn clamped her legs together and protested, “Stop it. Let’s have dinner first.” With the meal already prepared and the staff just outside, disappearing into the bedroom really wasn’t the best idea.

His lips found her ear as he whispered, "I'd rather have you before dinner."

"Please," she murmured, barely audible. "Can we wait until after dinner?"

Andrew's eyes darkened with anticipation. "And after dinner?" He always enjoyed watching her get flustered.

Biting her lip, Cathryn looked away, her cheeks burning. "You already know."

A deep chuckle rumbled from Andrew. "I can't wait. You first."

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"Margaret and the others are out there waiting," she whispered, her voice soft.

Ignoring her plea, he lowered his head, his mouth catching the strap of her bra. "They can wait a little longer."

Whatever resistance she had left dissolved, swept away by an overwhelming rush of pleasure. Her arms tightened around his neck as she let herself drift in the current of his desire.

Afterward, Andrew kneaded her waist gently. “You must be hungry by now. Let’s get something to eat.”

Flat on her back, Cathryn barely moved. “No way. I’m exhausted.”

Propping himself up on one elbow, he insisted, “You need to eat. Come on. I’ll carry you.”

Turning away, Cathryn mumbled, “I’m not hungry. All I want is sleep.”

Instead of arguing, Andrew wrapped her snugly in a blanket, scooped her up, and said, “You can sleep after you eat something.”

Held firmly in his arms, Cathryn nestled against his chest, eyes closed, content to let him carry her to the dining room. They’d been tucked away in the bedroom for over an hour and a half. By now, she assumed the staff would have finished for the night.

“Lovely evening, Mr. and Mrs. Brooks.”

A chorus of voices caught Cathryn off guard, making her eyes fly open. In the living room, the staff stood lined up—hands folded—greeting them with perfect formality.

With nothing but a camisole beneath the blanket and her bare legs in full view, Cathryn flushed a deep crimson and buried her face in his chest.

A smile tugged at Andrew's lips as she nestled against him—so shy, so kitten-soft.

"They saw you carrying me out here," she muttered, barely audible against his shirt.

A laugh rumbled in his chest. "Want me to set you down now?"

"No!" A startled squeak escaped her as she tightened her arms around his neck, refusing to let go. Dressed in only a camisole, her skin marked with his kisses, the thought of being seen like this made her want to vanish.

"Everyone, heads down," Andrew ordered, sweeping his gaze across the staff with quiet authority.

At once, they obeyed, bowing their heads.

Margaret quickly directed the servants. “Mr. and Mrs. Brooks are ready for dinner. Set the table, then please excuse yourselves.”

Without wasting a moment, the staff prepared the meal and left as soon as everything was in order, closing the door behind them.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 140:

Andrew ran a hand through Cathryn’s hair. “We’re alone now.”

Cautiously, Cathryn peeked up, eyes bright as she glanced around. Only then did she finally slip out of his arms. “You knew perfectly well the staff hadn’t left when you

decided to carry me out. You did that just to embarrass me.” Irritation flashed in her glare.

Andrew toyed absentmindedly with her fingers. “It’s part of their job. They’re not supposed to leave until we’ve eaten.”

A frown creased Cathryn’s brow. “After all that time we spent in the bedroom, I’m sure they figured out exactly what we were doing.”

He pressed a kiss to her palm, amusement lacing his voice. “Sweetheart, there was nothing for them to figure out. You were anything but quiet.”

Cathryn clapped both hands over her mouth, as if she could shove the sound back into her chest.

Andrew tilted his head, a glint of amusement in his eyes. “A little late to stifle it now, don’t you think?”

She smacked his chest with a muffled groan. “This is entirely your fault.”

In only a handful of nights, Andrew had mapped every sensitive spot on her body, unraveling her composure each time he touched her. Lost in that haze of pleasure, who could possibly keep their voice down?

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“Married couples enjoying themselves,” he murmured, brushing a kiss along her jaw, “is the most natural thing in the world. Nothing to blush over.”

Cathryn scowled, heat flooding her cheeks. “Next time—if people are around—you’re not allowed.”

His brow lifted with deliberate mischief. “Not allowed what?” The shyer she got, the more he wanted to coax the words from her.

She turned her face away. “You know what I mean. If anyone’s nearby, I won’t... I won’t let you touch me, no matter what you say.”

Andrew caught her chin, tipping her gaze back to his. “Then next time, I’ll clear the house first. Servants dismissed, doors locked. Only when we’re finished can they return.”

Her legs kicked in protest. “Can’t you just wait? At least until everyone’s asleep?”

He captured her thrashing legs with a lazy grin, his fingers trailing down her skin until she shivered. “Don’t blame me. Blame yourself—for being irresistible. The moment I see you, restraint isn’t an option...”

His mouth dipped to her chest, leaving fire in its wake.

By the time he pulled back, Cathryn's body was covered in flushed, tender marks. She drew a shaky breath. "Are you even hungry anymore...?"

"Oh, I'll eat," he whispered against her skin, his lips never pausing.

The next morning, Margaret slipped into the dining room and froze. Plates lay abandoned, the tablecloth rumpled, sofa cushions crushed beyond recognition. Her cheeks warmed. She waved the other staff away and chose to tidy the chaos herself.

...herself. There was no sense in letting the others witness the evidence—Cathryn would be mortified.

Margaret's heart swelled. The young couple had grown so close, and that alone made her glad.

Upstairs, Andrew stirred to find Cathryn still asleep, sunlight brushing delicate streaks across her face. He bent to press a soft kiss to her lips. She frowned in her sleep, rolled over, and slipped back into slumber.

Smiling faintly, he smoothed a hand through her hair before rising to dress.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 141:

“I’m heading to the office. Let Cathryn rest,” Andrew instructed Margaret. He’d kept her up unforgivably late, and she needed the sleep.

Margaret dipped her head.

The moment Andrew stepped outside, his smile vanished. Cara had likely learned of his return already—too many unfamiliar figures had been prowling near the executive floor lately.

His office crowned the building, accessible only by a private lift. Meetings were handled through secure video calls, keeping most of the Brooks Group convinced he remained abroad. But the illusion was cracking.

When Andrew reached the thirty-eighth floor, the elevator doors parted. Almost at once, the stairwell door banged open, and someone barreled straight into his chest.

Andrew's reflexes snapped tight. He caught the intruder by the arm, pinning her back against the wall. His eyes narrowed. "Who sent you?"

The woman lifted her gaze.

Andrew froze. It was Vanessa—Douglas' granddaughter.

Vanessa's pulse skipped as her eyes locked on the man before her. His face was all sharp planes and ruthless symmetry—piercing eyes that seemed to strip her bare, a nose carved from marble, lips drawn tight with restraint. Those eyes... they didn't just look at her. They looked through her.

The suit clung to his tall, commanding frame without a single wrinkle. Authority hung off him like a second skin—cold, untouchable. Vanessa's breath caught. A single glimpse of Andrew on a video call had already haunted her dreams. Now, standing only feet away, she couldn't tear her gaze from him. He was devastatingly handsome.

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“M-Mr. Brooks...” Her voice went syrupy, her knees threatening to give way. “I must have taken the wrong floor...”

Andrew’s grip remained unyielding around her arm. Pain flared, and she winced—just as a card slipped from her pocket and skittered across the polished floor.

He stooped and retrieved it.

A restricted access pass—the kind reserved for a select few executives. One that opened the stairwell and, more importantly, the private level reserved for the CEO.

“In the past week alone, ten people have ‘accidentally’ wandered up here.” Andrew flicked the card back at her, his voice glacial. “What? Do they hand the pass out at the lobby desk?”

Vanessa’s heart raced—not with fear, but exhilaration. Cara had sent her digging for scraps about Andrew; plenty of others had tried, but only she had managed to run straight into the man himself. Triumph glittered through her nerves. She was the first—the very first—to see the truth: Andrew wasn’t disfigured the way the rumors claimed. On the contrary, he was dangerously handsome.

And today, she had landed against that chest—hard, unyielding, unforgettable. The sensation still clung to her skin, drowning out Cara’s instructions.

“Leave.” His voice snapped like a whip as he shoved her off.

Vanessa staggered, catching herself against the wall. “Mr. Brooks,” she whispered, desperation and daring lacing her tone, “do you... do you need a personal secretary? I’m very good at taking care of people.”

Andrew pulled a disinfectant wipe from his pocket and scrubbed his hands with meticulous precision. His gaze never softened. “Why would I hire someone who can’t even pick a side?”

Her face burned, but ambition shoved pride aside. “If you want me, I’ll be your double agent. I’ll bring you everything Cara is plotting.”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 142:

He tossed the wipe into the bin with surgical disdain, lifting his gaze at last. His eyes cut through her, cool and unshaken. “Cara isn’t worth a counter-move. She doesn’t even qualify as an opponent.”

Vanessa nearly swooned. The dominance in his voice made her dizzy, reverent.

“Besides,” he added, the words low and merciless, “you’ve already offended the wrong person. If you don’t want to end up dead, stay out of my sight.”

He turned on his heel and vanished into his office, the door closing with finality.

Vanessa stood rooted, confusion clawing at her chest. Offended the wrong person? How? She’d barely exchanged words with him today.

Just then, her phone buzzed. She snatched it up with trembling fingers. Cara’s voice slid through the line, cold and eager. “Well? Did you see Andrew?”

Vanessa lingered in the corridor, her gaze clinging to the sealed doors of the CEO's office. The memory of Andrew's iron grip still burned on her arm—a faint ache that made her cheeks flush with a strange shyness. She pressed her phone closer to her lips and whispered, fragile, "I saw him..."

"Useless," Cara snapped on the other end. Frustration boiled through her words. Messenger after messenger had been sent to the executive floor, all returning empty-handed—none able to confirm whether Andrew was disfigured and crippled. She realized that if she wanted the truth, she would have to hunt it herself.

Meanwhile, Andrew wrapped up his workday with clinical efficiency. He stepped into the private elevator without sparing his office a final glance. With a wife waiting at home, his evenings were not to be squandered on work.

He was just reaching for his car door when a voice curled through the night air. "Mr. Brooks."

He turned. It was Cara.

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Years had passed since their last encounter, yet Cara stood before him as if sculpted from wealth itself. Diamonds winked on her wrist, her heels struck the pavement like a metronome, and her face—flawlessly smooth, unnervingly youthful—mocked the decades she had lived.

Andrew's eyes turned to shards of winter glass.

Cara approached with a practiced smile, swinging her designer bag like a trophy. "Damien," she breathed, her voice dripping with false relief, "seeing you well, I can finally rest easy."

Her manicured fingers dared to rise toward his cheek.

But beneath that flawless act, fury seethed. His unmarked skin, his unbroken stride—no scars, no limp—shattered the truth behind the rumors. She had hoped for weakness. Instead, she faced strength.

Andrew struck her hand aside. His tone was carved from stone. "You have no right to call me Damien." Only his grandmother had that right.

A brittle laugh escaped her. "I overstepped."

His gaze narrowed to a blade. "If you want to wrest control of the company, do it in daylight. If I lose, I'll hand you the CEO's chair myself. Just stop scheming in the shadows."

Cara's smile quivered for a beat before she steadied it. "You jest. Brooks Group is yours. I only wish to help. We are family—why speak of battles?"

Andrew's reply was glacial. "Nick will be home soon. What do you intend for him?"

Cara's expression shifted. Nick—her pride, her jewel. The son she had sworn to crown with the world. But in a family war, there could be only one victor. She refused to see her son sacrificed. Andrew stood in the way, immovable—a wall she was determined to tear down.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 143:

“You are his elder brother,” she said sweetly, lashes lowered. “Nick’s future rests entirely in your care...”

Her voice trembled with feigned humility, masking the sharpened steel beneath.

Andrew’s words cleaved the air. “As long as I draw breath, Nick will never set foot in Brooks Group.”

Cara’s smile cracked, brittle as porcelain. She had imagined Andrew might grant Nick some sliver of power, some middle-management role. Instead, he barred every door.

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“Nick is Jorge’s son too,” she spat, composure splintering. “He has a claim to Brooks Group.”

Andrew’s stare hollowed into an abyss. “And unfortunately for him, I’m his elder brother. Brooks Group belongs to me alone.”

“Andrew Brooks!” His name tore from her throat, raw and furious, her elegant poise unraveling.

He ignored her, coolly pulling open the car door and sliding in.

Cara's hand snapped around the door handle. Her voice hissed like venom through clenched teeth. "Do you truly believe you can do whatever you please?"

Andrew's lips curved into a cold, deliberate smile. "Yes."

He was no longer the frail three-year-old—the boy beaten bloody by a nanny, starved until his ribs showed, left to wither like an unwanted weed.

Cara's voice dripped with bitterness. "You can't be ungrateful. If not for—"

"That wicked nanny," Andrew cut in, his tone a razor drawn across flesh. "You hired her, did you not? If my grandmother hadn't noticed something amiss and brought me to her side, I would have starved to death in that empty house long ago."

The blood drained from Cara's face. She stumbled back two faltering steps, terror flashing in her eyes. How could he know? He had been only three years old then.

Their gazes locked, an invisible current tightening the air. Cara shivered beneath the weight of it. Andrew was dangerous—sharper than she remembered.

But she still had Cathryn. She couldn't yield.

Her lips curled into a brittle smile. "You think you can do whatever you wish. But you're mistaken. Let me give you one piece of advice—be careful of the person who shares your bed."

Andrew's expression hardened, eyes narrowing to slits. "What did you just say?"

Cara lifted a hand and smoothed her hair with studied indifference. Her voice drifted, airy and taunting. "You're skilled at reading people. No need for me to spell it out."

With a pivot, she strode away, heels clicking a staccato warning across the pavement until the night swallowed her.

Andrew remained in the car, unmoving, his reflection shadowed in the dim light. A single thought took root in his mind—dark, poisonous, unrelenting.

Just then, the shrill buzz of his phone cut through the silence.

"How's it going?" Nick's clear, boyish voice spilled into his ear.

The hard lines of Andrew's face softened. "I'm fine."

“You saw my mother?”

“I did.”

“She’s still fierce, isn’t she?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 144:

A low chuckle escaped Andrew. “She hasn’t changed a bit.”

Nick sighed dramatically. “She keeps telling me to return to Olekgan, but I don’t want to. I don’t want to run the Brooks Group or play businessman. You have to help me.”

“The title of CEO of the Brooks Group doesn’t tempt you at all?” Andrew asked.

“You sound just like her—fighting for the CEO position and all that nonsense,” Nick grumbled. “I couldn’t care less. Too much work, too many headaches. I’d rather live as a spoiled rich heir—play when I want, sleep when I please.”

Andrew’s lips curved, indulgent. “And who will fund this carefree empire of yours?”

Nick laughed. “You, of course. I wouldn’t need much. You can afford my spending.”

Andrew pressed a hand to his brow, amusement warming his tone. “That depends on whether my wife agrees to let me bankroll your laziness.”

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“No—” Nick practically howled down the line. “You got married? What does that leave me, your precious little brother?”

Andrew pinched the bridge of his nose, his voice turning into a dry drawl. “You’re not a child, Nick. Do you even hear yourself? It’s nauseating.”

A theatrical sigh came from Nick. “Fine. Just make sure I never cross paths with that woman when I’m back. If I do, I won’t let her off easy.” How dare she steal his brother.

“Watch your mouth,” Andrew snapped, a low warning threading through his tone. “She’s not that woman. She’s my wife—your sister-in-law.”

Keys clicked faintly on Nick’s end, the sound of a game in progress. “Hope she plays games well and can queue with me.”

“Pathetic,” Andrew muttered under his breath.

Nick chuckled, unbothered. “Actually, I met someone online. Her handle’s Kestrel. She’s a beast in the game, but cold as ice—keeps calling me an idiot and won’t team up.”

The name jolted Andrew, a spark of recognition flaring. Kestrel? Could it be the master programmer he’d been looking for? No. Ridiculous. Just a screen name. The legendary Kestrel would never waste time on a mindless MMO with Nick.

Andrew ended the call, a faint smile tugging at his lips despite himself, and steered the car toward home.

Crownspire Villa glowed under the late afternoon sun. Upstairs, Cathryn lay sprawled across the bed, her phone balanced loosely in one hand. Andrew was still at work. With endless empty hours pressing in, boredom had begun to gnaw at her. She'd downloaded the season's hottest online game just to pass the time.

Thanks to her coding background, the mechanics came easily; within two rounds, she was crushing opponents. Victory arrived too quickly, and the thrill faded.

One persistent player—The Uncrowned King—kept bombarding her with friend requests, begging her to mentor him.

A glance at his pitiful record—a long parade of losses—made her decline without a second thought. Babysitting was not her idea of fun.

With a sigh, she tossed the phone aside and reached for her brush, resuming her careful copy of “Midnight Lilies.”

What had begun as a harmless hobby had turned into a quiet plan: she would gift the finished painting to Cara—a polite way to repay the designer bag—and then draw a clear line between them. Cara's friendliness unsettled her. It felt calculated. No one showered that much kindness without an angle.

Just as Andrew pulled into the driveway, his phone buzzed. Karl's name flashed on the screen.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 145:

"Mr. Brooks." Karl's voice was steady but cautious. "I sent you some photos. Of your wife. You might want to brace yourself."

Andrew's knuckles whitened around the wheel as he opened the file. Images filled the screen: Cathryn smiling, her arm linked with Cara's, the two of them strolling together with an intimacy that stung.

A text from Karl followed. “I checked. The bag your wife is carrying is a limited-edition Hermès—about a hundred thousand. Cara spent six months pulling strings to get it.”

Half a year.

Andrew’s gaze darkened. Had Cathryn known Cara that long? Was she really someone Cara had planted?

Restless anger rose like a tide. He fished a cigarette from the console, lit it with a sharp flick, and drew in a lungful of smoke. It curled around his face, veiling his expression.

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He and Cathryn had been together three months. Somehow, she had become indispensable to him. Love? He wasn’t sure. But he knew one thing—he didn’t want to let her go.

He didn’t care that she was divorced. He didn’t care that she was uneducated. He didn’t even care if she had first approached him out of a desire for revenge. He was willing to be her blade, her ladder upward.

But there was one betrayal he could never forgive: if she had come to him on Cara’s orders.

He loathed Cara with every fiber of his being.

Smoke burned his throat. He exhaled slowly, remembering Cathryn's insistence that her appearance at his hotel room door had been an accident. He had chosen to believe her.

Andrew flicked the cigarette into the gravel, swung open the car door, and stepped into the villa.

"Where's my wife?" His voice was cool, even.

"In the shower," Margaret replied.

Andrew headed to the bedroom. No sign of the Hermès bag from the photos. Relief loosened, faint but real, in his chest. Cathryn wasn't the type to care about designer goods. She would never trade herself for a handbag.

The tension in his shoulders eased a fraction.

He shed his jacket and opened the wardrobe—and froze.

Inside, everything was slightly disturbed, a quiet jumble. His hand moved on instinct, closing around a white designer bag.

The same one from the photo.

Cathryn had taken it.

Moments later, Cathryn emerged from the bathroom, steam curling around her like a reluctant veil, her skin still glistening from the shower. Andrew sat on the edge of the bed, shoulders rigid, his expression carved from stone.

“You’re home early today,” she said brightly, slipping into his arms and looping hers around his neck—a gesture meant to close the distance.

He didn’t move. He only looked at her.

A flicker of unease rippled through her chest. She brushed her fingers over her cheek as if something might be out of place. “What? Why are you looking at me like that?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 146:

“Is there anything you want to tell me?” His voice was low, measured.

She hesitated, then tried for a teasing smile. “That you missed me today?”

Andrew’s eyes dimmed, the faint light in them snuffed out. She was hiding something.

Later, after dinner, Andrew retreated to the study and buried himself in work, as though the papers were his only refuge.

Cathryn lingered at the doorway, gently reminding him to shower and rest, but he only grunted, his eyes never leaving the screen.

Something felt wrong tonight. For once, he didn’t drift close or let his hands find her.

“You should go to bed,” he said at last, still not looking up.

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A hollow ache opened in Cathryn’s chest. She turned away, padded back to the bedroom, and slipped beneath the covers alone.

In the study, Andrew’s phone rang.

Karl’s voice came through, flat and businesslike. “Mr. Brooks, we found the record. About six months ago, Cara wired five million to your wife.”

Andrew’s head snapped up. His gaze drifted toward the bedroom Cathryn had disappeared into.

Ice crept into his eyes—sharp and merciless.

So it was true. She really was Cara’s plant.

No matter how vigilant Andrew had been, he hadn't guarded against this—against his own heart turning on him. What cut deepest wasn't the danger itself, but the truth staring him in the face: he had fallen for Cathryn.

With a sharp crack, Andrew's fist struck the desk.

On the phone, Karl's voice stayed steady, calm as stone. "From what I've seen, your wife's feelings for you don't look fake. Maybe Cara reached out to her, or maybe your wife was threatened. You should talk to your wife."

Andrew ended the call without replying.

If Cathryn had once been entangled with Cara but had chosen to cut those ties, he could forgive her. He wanted to forgive her.

He rose, shoulders heavy, and headed for the shower.

From the bed, Cathryn heard the hiss of water spill into the silence. She slipped off the mattress and padded across the room, lifting his discarded white shirt from the floor. She gave it a shake, ready to hang it—when her breath caught.

There, on the collar, bloomed a smudge of lipstick.

Her hand trembled as she touched it. The stain smeared faintly beneath her fingertip—fresh, new, damning.

For a moment, her mind went utterly blank.

No wonder he had been so cold. The distance, the silence... He had someone else.

She sank onto the edge of the bed, hollow-eyed and numb. She had always known fidelity was a fragile hope with a man like him. She just hadn't expected his interest to sour so soon.

Her nails bit crescent marks into her palms until her skin burned. Couldn't he wait just one year? After that, she would be gone—and he could do whatever he wanted.

But maybe it was her fault. Maybe she'd been too guarded, too distant, leaving him unsatisfied, pushing him elsewhere. That had to be it. He was twenty-eight—restless, relentless. With his face, his name, his fortune, temptation circled him like moths to flame. Even if he didn't chase it, women would throw themselves at his feet.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 147:

If she wanted to hold him—keep him—then she had to give him no reason to look away.

Jaw set with quiet resolve, she slid back beneath the sheets and stilled her breathing, feigning sleep. Her ears strained for the moment the water stopped.

The bathroom door opened.

Footsteps approached.

The mattress dipped with his weight.

Her heart pounded so violently it hurt, waiting for the warmth of his arms around her.

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But he lay rigid beside her—a cold wall of silence—without so much as glancing her way.

A chill seeped into her bones. She couldn't stand it. If he wouldn't bridge the gap, she would. She rolled toward him, draped a leg over his, pressed her body close—offering warmth, closeness, surrender.

He didn't move.

After a long pause, he gently slid her leg away, turned his back to her, and said flatly, "Just sleep."

He had never reacted like this. Her chest ached as if it were being crushed. She knew it now with sickening certainty: there was another woman.

They lay through the night divided by an invisible gulf. He didn't touch her once.

At dawn, Andrew rose as he always did, needing little sleep.

Cathryn deliberately left one bare leg peeking out from beneath the sheets—a silent plea for the small tenderness he usually showed, the way he would pull the covers back over her.

But he didn't even glance her way. He dressed without a word and walked out.

Left alone, she curled into the bed's hollow warmth, chilled to the core. Half of her wanted to confront him outright. The other half feared she was a fool—that her suspicion was nothing but jealousy eating her alive.

She poured her restless energy into painting, finishing her copy of "Midnight Lilies" in one feverish burst. By noon, the canvas was dry enough to take out for framing.

As Cathryn stepped into a waiting cab, Gavin's car eased from the curb behind her. Andrew's order from that morning still rang in his ears: "Follow her. Everywhere. Report everything."

Gavin hadn't argued—he never did. The last time he'd been tasked with tailing Cathryn, nothing had come of it. No clandestine meetings, no impropriety—just a trail of ordinary errands.

Inside the frame shop, Cathryn handed over her canvas, then lowered her gaze to her phone.

She hadn't saved Cara's number—better to keep temptation at bay—so she scrolled back to the day Cara had called. Two unfamiliar numbers.

She tapped the first.

When the line connected, Cathryn said, “Mrs. Brooks, are you free to meet? Same café as last time?”

Only silence answered.

“Mrs. Brooks?” Cathryn tried again.

The call dropped.

Wrong number, then. She didn't dwell on it. She tried the second.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 148:

“Cathryn?” Cara’s voice came through, warm and familiar.

Relief eased Cathryn’s shoulders. “Mrs. Brooks, the bag you gave me—it’s far too extravagant. I have nothing worthy to match it, but I copied a Louis Marquet for you. I hope you’ll accept that instead.”

Cara’s laugh bubbled with delight. “Perfect. Marquet is my weakness. I’m at Élan Beauty Spa this afternoon—could you drop by?”

“Of course,” Cathryn said without hesitation.

Later, Cathryn carried the framed canvas into the spa’s gleaming lobby. “I’m here to see Mrs. Brooks,” she told the receptionist.

The receptionist's smile turned knowing. "You must be Ms. Moore. Mrs. Brooks is in the middle of a treatment. Please, have a seat."

Cathryn settled onto a velvet sofa and idly picked up a brochure—only to freeze when she saw Cara's face on the cover. Not just a patron, but the founder and majority shareholder of Élan Beauty.

Outside, Gavin parked at the curb, his jaw tightening as he read the gilded sign above the door. Élan Beauty. Cara's territory.

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What business could Cathryn possibly have here?

He thumbed his phone and called. "Mrs. Brooks, where are you now?"

"I'm just meeting a friend. I'll be home soon," Cathryn replied lightly.

The pause that followed was thick. Gavin almost asked which friend, but swallowed the question. Too dangerous.

Her voice softened. "I'm only dropping something off. Don't tell Damien."

The words made Gavin's throat tighten. "Understood," he murmured.

Reporting this to Andrew would be like tossing a lit match into dry tinder. Better to frame it differently. Girls loved beauty treatments, after all. Cathryn probably didn't have the faintest idea Élan was Cara's domain.

At Brooks Group headquarters, Karl pushed open the CEO's office door and approached the wide mahogany desk. "Mr. Brooks," he said, voice low and deferential, "your wife just called me."

Andrew lifted his head, eyes narrowing. "What did Cathryn want?"

Karl hesitated, his thumb worrying at his cuff. "She meant to call Cara but misdialed. The call came to me instead."

A storm gathered behind Andrew's eyes. Cathryn had reached out to Cara—on her own. "What exactly did she say?" His jaw flexed, each syllable clipped.

Karl lowered his gaze. "She wanted to meet Cara at the same café as before."

Andrew's hand tightened around his phone as he dialed Gavin. "Where did Cathryn go?"

“She just took a cab to pick up some things,” Gavin reported. “She hasn’t met anyone.”

“She’s home now?” Andrew asked.

Just then, Gavin spotted Cathryn emerging through the spa’s glass doors. Relief flickered across his face. “Yes, she’s back.”

Andrew ended the call. The storm in his eyes eased, though shadows lingered. “She didn’t see Cara.”

Karl inclined his head. “That’s a relief.”

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Chapter 149:

Later that afternoon, Andrew crossed the corridor toward the meeting room. As he passed Cara's office, his stride faltered. On the wall hung *Midnight Lilies*—the painting meant for his own bedroom, its dark blooms now gracing her space.

He summoned Ethan with a flick of his hand. "Why is that painting in there?"

Ethan bowed slightly. "Mrs. Brooks had it delivered at noon. She said it was a gift from a friend. She asked us to hang it."

Andrew's voice turned frigid. "Bring it to me."

When the canvas arrived, Andrew studied it in silence. Not the original—only a copy. Yet his gaze snagged on the corner: a single green leaf, out of place.

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His chest tightened. Cathryn's copy. The one she worked on late at night. And that leaf—he remembered laying that brushstroke himself.

So Cathryn had met Cara and gifted her this painting.

Then why had Gavin lied?

Cold fury lit Andrew's veins as he strode back to Crownspire Villa.

"Mr. Brooks—" Gavin stepped forward, but Andrew cut him off.

"Study. Now."

His tone left no air for disobedience.

Upstairs, the door shut with finality.

Andrew leaned back in his chair, eyes fixed on Gavin. "Tell me, Gavin. Who do you serve?"

Gavin's shoulders sagged. "You, Mr. Brooks."

A photo landed on the desk with a sharp slap—the image of Cathryn leaving Élan Beauty Spa. "Care to explain this?"

Gavin's blood ran cold. He'd thought Andrew's suspicions about Cathryn were like before—just a test. Clearly, he'd misjudged. Andrew was serious this time.

"What did Cathryn give you to buy you off?" Andrew's stare pierced like a blade.

"She didn't." Cold sweat prickled along Gavin's spine under that gaze.

Andrew rose slowly, hands buried in his pockets, his presence looming. “Then was it Cara? Did she pay you?”

“Never!” Gavin shook his head violently. “I’ve never taken a coin from Cara. I swear it.”

Andrew’s gaze slid back to the photo. “Then explain this.”

Gavin’s throat went dry. “Your wife only went to see a friend. She... she didn’t know the spa belonged to your stepmother.”

Something flickered in Andrew’s eyes—doubt, anger, something darker. “That’s what she told you?”

“Yes,” Gavin whispered.

Andrew’s teeth ground together. “She met Cara. Don’t kid yourself.”

The color drained from Gavin’s face.

“How many times have you lied to cover for her?” Andrew demanded.

“Only this once,” Gavin said quickly.

Andrew’s stare narrowed, sharp as glass. “Karl is already tracing her every step. Pray you still have a place here when the truth comes out.”

“I believe your wife has her reasons,” Gavin murmured.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 150:

Andrew's laugh was low and bitter. "The Brooks family signs your paychecks, not her."

Gavin's voice dipped, almost a mutter. "But she is still the lady of this house. She is part of this family."

Ice crystallized in Andrew's eyes. "She isn't. She's nothing but a weapon. A tool I used against Cara."

Outside the study, Cathryn froze.

A tray of coffee trembled in her hands, her knuckles white around the porcelain. So that was it—his reason for marrying her. She wasn't a wife, only leverage.

The pieces slid into place with cruel clarity: Cara's sudden warmth, her feigned kindness—it had all been part of the same game. And she, caught in the middle, had been used by both sides.

Her chest hollowed as the air was stolen from her lungs. Keeping the tray steady, she turned away and descended the stairs on unsteady legs.

Inside the study, Gavin tried once more. "Mr. Brooks, perhaps you should give your wife the chance to prove her innocence."

Andrew's gaze lingered on the photo, tangled with suspicion—and something he couldn't name. His grandmother had told him Cathryn wasn't the one she'd chosen for him.

That night, he had confronted Cathryn point-blank, demanding to know whether Cara had sent her. She had denied it instantly, swearing she had never so much as crossed paths with Cara. And yet the evidence kept piling up—proof she'd known Cara half a year ago.

Was Cathryn lying?

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He needed to look her in the eyes and decide for himself. "Leave me," he ordered.

Gavin dipped his head, retreated from the study, and pulled the heavy door shut with a muted thud.

Andrew reached for the phone, his fingers steady, his jaw tight. "Karl, arrange a business trip for me to Bluufburg. I will take the Crescent Ridge Highway."

A pause crackled on the line. "Mr. Brooks, if you're set on Bluufburg, you could fly. Crescent Ridge Highway is nicknamed the Death Road for a reason—the accident toll each year is staggering. It's far too dangerous."

Andrew slid open the desk drawer, fished out a cigarette, and balanced it at the corner of his mouth. The faint crackle of paper and the sharp scent of tobacco filled the air like a challenge.

Danger was precisely what he craved. He wanted to push fate—to see how much of Cathryn’s heart truly belonged to him.

“Seal off all news of my trip,” Andrew said, voice flat and unyielding. “No one is to know.”

Andrew stepped out of the study and found Cathryn seated in the living room, her gaze fixed on nothing, her thoughts drifting far away.

“Pack two sets of clothes for me. I’m heading on a business trip to Bluufburg,” he said.

Cathryn lifted her eyes to him, her expression unreadable. “Are you going alone?”

“Yes.” His voice was flat, but his stare lingered on her.

A faint smile tugged at her lips as she lowered her gaze and shook her head. If Damien were taking another woman along, he would never confess it.

“I’ll take the mountain loop road—Crescent Ridge Highway.” His dark eyes searched hers, as if trying to see straight through her.

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