

Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 151:

Cathryn let out a soft laugh, though it tasted bitter. “I hear the scenery along that road is breathtaking. Couples love to drive there, don’t they?”

She didn’t need to say more. Everyone knew flying to Bluufburg took two hours, but the winding mountain road stretched the journey to five. People risked the sharp cliffs for one reason alone: the panoramic views and the famed Lovers’ Valley, where couples posed for photographs and whispered promises. Given Damien’s stature, he would never choose such a perilous, time-consuming route—unless he intended to share it with someone special.

“It’s beautiful,” he admitted, his tone low, “but one wrong step can cost you your life.”

Cathryn’s heart sank. He knew the risks, yet he was determined to go.

“When do you leave?” she asked.

“Tomorrow afternoon.”

Cathryn rose, her steps light but her heart leaden. “I’ll pack your clothes.”

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She could hardly breathe around the ache in her chest. She was preparing her husband’s wardrobe for his upcoming meeting with another woman.

That night, Andrew lay beside her but kept his distance.

Cathryn turned her back to him, her eyes burning with unshed tears. His earlier words—reducing her to nothing but a tool to deal with Cara—echoed in her mind like a cruel refrain. She stared at the ceiling until dawn painted the room gray.

By morning, Andrew was already dressed, his back to her as he fastened his shirt.

Only then did Kathryn notice the faint, angry stripes of whip marks marring his skin—still unhealed. Her heart clenched.

He had once risked his life to save her.

Perhaps he had used her, but hadn't she used him too? Their marriage was nothing more than a contract. Neither of them owed the other fidelity.

Cathryn rose quietly and crossed the room. She took hold of his tie, her fingers brushing his chest. "Let me," she whispered.

Andrew froze, his eyes dropping to her face. The fragile sadness there pierced straight through his armor.

"The Crescent Ridge Highway is dangerous. Let Gavin drive you," she murmured as she knotted the silk.

It wasn't the tie she had gifted him. Of course not. Wearing his wife's gift while meeting another woman would ruin the mood.

"Alright," Andrew replied at last, though his gaze grew unreadable. He had told Cathryn his route for a reason. If word leaked to Cara—the woman who wished him dead more than anything—he would know who had betrayed him.

"Cathryn," he said suddenly, his voice heavy, "would you lie to me?"

She met his eyes without flinching. "No."

The only lie she had ever told him was the one that had bound them together in marriage—a lie spun for revenge. Since then, she had spoken nothing but the truth.

Andrew studied her, then lifted a hand to cradle her cheek. “I hope you haven’t.” He hoped Cathryn had nothing to do with Cara.

Not long after he left, Cathryn’s phone rang. Jordyn’s mocking voice oozed from the speaker. “Cathryn, I found a bag of your mother’s junk. If you don’t want it, I’ll toss it out.”

The words sliced deep. When Cathryn had been driven out of the Watson home, she hadn’t been allowed to take her mother’s keepsakes.

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“It’s just rags, really. Old clothes. Nothing worth saving...” Jordyn drawled.

“Don’t throw them away,” Cathryn cut in, her voice taut with desperation. Her mother’s belongings at the Moore estate had already gone up in flames, courtesy of Richard. The few items left at the Watson house were all she had.

“I’m at the café. Come get them.” Jordyn hung up without another word.

Cathryn wasted no time. She flagged down a taxi and rushed over.

Inside the café, Jordyn lounged with a coffee, her eyes narrowing as Cathryn stepped out of the cab. A mocking smirk curved her lips as she called out, “Where’s your chauffeur husband? Too busy to pick you up in that Maybach?”

Cathryn’s laugh was airy, dismissive. “You seem very invested in who drives me around. If you knew I was living in Crownspire Villa, you’d probably faint on the spot.”

The color drained from Jordyn’s face. Her eyes widened, raking Cathryn from head to toe. “You? Living in Crownspire Villa?”

Cathryn tilted her head, a small smile playing at the corner of her mouth. “Yes.”

It made little difference to her where she stayed, as long as she had a roof over her head. But if it unsettled Jordyn, all the better.

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Jordyn clutched her stomach as she laughed. “You, living in Crownspire Villa? What’s next—dozens of servants at your beck and call?”

Cathryn arched an eyebrow, the faintest glint of amusement in her eyes. That was actually true.

Jordyn’s smile iced over. “Cathryn, don’t think a Hermès bag from Cara makes you one of the Brooks family. Cara’s only using you.”

Cathryn’s brows drew together. Cara?

The name jolted something loose—Damien’s cutting words the day he’d discovered she wasn’t the one his grandmother had handpicked for him, demanding to know whether Cara had sent her into his life. Later, Cara had reached out, insisting on gifting her the designer bag, and Cathryn had returned the courtesy with a painting of her own.

Had Damien gotten the wrong idea and assumed she was colluding with Cara?

Her thoughts scattered as Jordyn flung a bundle of clothes at her. “These belonged to the dead. Keeping them in my room with Liam is nothing but bad luck.”

Cathryn cradled her mother’s things protectively. When she lifted her gaze, it was steady and sharp. “And the bed in that room— is it comfortable?”

Her voice was soft, but it carried an edge. “Liam and I chose it together, just before our wedding. We slept in it for three years.”

Jordyn’s face blanched, fury sparking in her widened eyes. “Cathryn, you—”

But Cathryn was already turning. With the clothes clutched to her chest, she strode out of the café without a backward glance.

Jordyn’s teeth ground together as she watched Cathryn disappear through the doorway. “You’ll regret this, Cathryn.”

She slipped earphones into her ears, a sly curl tugging at her lips. Hidden among the bundle of clothes was a listening device.

Stepping out of the café, Cathryn lifted a hand to flag down a taxi—only to watch Gavin’s car pull up right in front of her. Surprise jolted through her.

“Why aren’t you with Damien on his trip?” she asked.

Gavin frowned. “He didn’t ask me to go.”

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The answer stunned Cathryn. Crescent Ridge Highway had a notorious reputation—twisting lanes, sheer drops, and accidents that made headlines. If anyone was meant to be behind the wheel for Damien, it should have been Gavin.

Then Jordyn's mocking words echoed in Cathryn's mind: "Cara's only using you."

Cathryn remembered Cara's bright smile, the way she'd approached her so warmly. Yet Damien had been wary from the start, convinced Cathryn had been sent by Cara. A sick feeling swept through her.

Cara might want to harm Damien.

Color drained from Cathryn's cheeks as she grabbed Gavin's sleeve. "Gavin, hurry. We need to get to Crescent Ridge Highway. Damien is likely in danger."

Shock flickered in Gavin's eyes. He didn't hesitate. He slid into the driver's seat and sped onto the road without another word.

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With trembling fingers, Cathryn pulled out her phone and called Damien. No response. She tried Karl next—nothing from him either.

Her heart hammered. Deep down, she was certain now: Cara must have sent someone to ambush Damien along that route.

Regret gnawed at her, and she fought the urge to slap herself. She'd focused only on Cara's grudge against Andrew, never considering that Cara might try to get rid of Jorge's illegitimate son—Damien. Now that Cara was the matriarch of the Brooks family and had her own son, she would never allow rival heirs to exist.

Meanwhile, Jordyn caught every word of Cathryn's urgent exchange with Gavin through the listening device. Watching Cathryn hurry off, Jordyn couldn't help curling her lip in disdain.

Cathryn had claimed she was holed up at Crownspire Villa. It turned out she merely worked there. A servant married to a butler—how fitting.

Jordyn wasted no time calling Zoe. "I heard it for myself. Cathryn's husband is on his way to Crescent Ridge Highway."

A spark of excitement lit Zoe's voice. "That's perfect. I'll give Cara the heads-up."

Jordyn frowned in confusion. "Why would Cara care about the butler's whereabouts?"

"You honestly don't see it?" Zoe replied with a laugh. "Gavin only answers to Andrew. Wherever Gavin goes, it's basically Andrew moving around. Everyone knows there's a tug-of-war between Cara and Andrew for control of Brooks Group."

Suddenly, the pieces clicked into place for Jordyn, and a smirk tugged at her lips. “So that’s what all this is about.”

Truth be told, the Brooks family feud bored Jordyn. What thrilled her was the idea that Cathryn was nothing but a servant at Crownspire Villa.

She rang up Liam. “Hey, Liam, have you heard? Cathryn’s nothing more than a maid at Crownspire Villa.”

“That’s impossible,” Liam shot back, his tone sharp.

Jordyn let out a harsh, mocking laugh. “She tied herself to some old guy who’s barely hanging on. Why wouldn’t she end up working as a maid?”

For a moment, Liam offered no response.

“She acts like royalty—cruising around in a Maybach, living at Crownspire Villa—but the truth? She’s nothing more than a maid on the payroll.” Jordyn’s words dripped with contempt.

The idea thrilled her. Maybe if Liam knew Cathryn’s current status, he’d finally drop his obsession with Cathryn and turn his attention back to their marriage.

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To Jordyn, there had never been any competition. Cathryn was just a servant, while she stood proud as a Moore family daughter.

Meanwhile, on Crescent Ridge Highway, Karl's hands tightened on the steering wheel, his attention fixed on every twisting turn ahead.

In the back seat, Andrew remained silent, his eyes locked on the treacherous road. His knuckles turned pale as his fists clenched. He hoped Cathryn wouldn't betray his trust.

Breaking the silence, Karl glanced at Andrew through the rearview mirror. “Mr. Brooks, you could’ve let me drive your car alone down this road to create the illusion you were inside. You shouldn’t have taken the risk of tagging along.”

Andrew kept his fist planted firmly on his knee, unfazed by the car’s sharp swerves. When he spoke, his voice was cold and controlled. “Do you honestly think Cara is that easy to fool?”

At just eighteen, Cara had seized the title of Brooks family matriarch. Only someone utterly ruthless could have managed that.

The reminder left Karl speechless. He’d been at Andrew’s side during his long stay overseas, and he had seen firsthand just how ruthless Cara could be.

Eventually, Karl spoke again, relief easing into his voice. “We’re almost past the most dangerous part, Mr. Brooks. Once we clear this last stretch, we’ll be out of harm’s way.”

A flicker of ease crossed Andrew’s face, his tense grip finally loosening.

Karl allowed himself to relax and continued, “Cara’s a master at manipulating people. I’m certain she staged all those encounters with your wife just to make you doubt her.”

Andrew’s gaze softened, regret flickering in his eyes. He shouldn’t have suspected Cathryn. Even if doubt had gnawed at him, he owed her a conversation—he should have

listened to what she had to say. He couldn't believe he'd fallen for Cara's manipulations so easily.

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"Hold on—looks like an accident up ahead." Karl suddenly slowed the car.

A dump truck loomed ahead, blocking their path, while several men in rescue gear waved for them to stop.

Karl rolled down his window. "What seems to be the problem?"

One of the crew members jogged over and leaned in. "The truck broke down, but it's good to go now. Just hang tight for a moment."

With a nod, Karl rolled the window back up.

A couple of minutes later, the truck rumbled to life and started moving forward. Karl followed carefully, keeping his distance.

As the road sloped upward, the truck reached the hill's peak. The Maybach had only just begun its ascent when the truck's bed suddenly broke free.

“This isn’t good.” Shock flashed across Karl’s face as he slammed the brakes, trying to turn, but the road was far too narrow.

Huge rocks—each one the size of a human skull—came crashing down from the truck’s bed, barreling toward them at terrifying speed.

In a panic, Karl threw the car into reverse, but the uneven ground and the looming cliff left no room for error. One wrong move could be fatal.

Andrew could only stare as stones battered the hood and shattered the windshield.

Karl’s hands shook as he fought for control, but the Maybach skidded, sliding off the road and pitching them dangerously close to the edge.

Everything spiraled into chaos. Andrew’s world plunged into darkness.

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Just before it swallowed him, a single thought echoed in his mind—he had been wrong to trust Cathryn.

Cathryn caught a cab home. In the quiet of the back seat, she couldn't shake the strange unease clinging to her—like trouble was waiting just out of sight.

When she checked her phone, a vivid red warning icon flared across the screen. A shadow passed over her eyes. She had built the privacy app out of boredom, just to see whether anyone ever tapped into her calls. Now it was screaming for her attention.

Her gaze snapped to the package sitting beside her, and she tore it open. As she suspected, a listening device fell out.

Jordyn had planted it.

But why would she go this far?

Cathryn thought back to her encounter with Jordyn. The only thing she'd said was to tell Gavin to drive toward Crescent Ridge Highway. A chill swept over her.

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She had let her guard down.

Originally, Cara had no idea Damien was taking Crescent Ridge Highway. But with Jordyn listening in on her call with Gavin, Cara had likely dispatched men to go after Damien.

Frantic, Cathryn grabbed her phone to warn Gavin. She didn't even get to dial before her phone rang.

Gavin's voice came through, urgent and shaken. "Mrs. Brooks, something happened to Mr. Brooks."

Cathryn's blood turned cold. "Was it a crash?"

There was a pause on the other end. "The car went over the cliff."

Everything seemed to tilt around her.

By the time Gavin arrived at the scene, the Maybach had tumbled down the hillside, leaving devastation in its wake. Without wasting a second, Cathryn rushed straight to the hospital.

News of the accident reached Jordyn and Zoe through Cara, and both showed up at the hospital, ready to watch Cathryn fall apart. Assuming Cathryn's husband had been the one driving Andrew, they figured neither man stood much chance of walking away from a wreck that severe.

A doctor's urgent voice rang out. "Two critical patients. Get them to surgery—move!"

Onlookers stared as bloodied bodies were rushed down the hallway. Cathryn surged forward, desperate to see, but a nurse blocked her path.

"Ma'am, please step aside and let us work."

Jordyn wasted no time, flashing a cruel smile. "Cathryn, I heard your husband crashed the Maybach off a cliff. No one's making it out of that alive. You'd better brace yourself for some bad news."

Cathryn's eyes—red and furious—met Jordyn's without blinking. “Dare to repeat yourself?”

With a mocking laugh, Jordyn replied, “I didn't say anything wrong. Isn't your husband pushing sixty? If he survives, you'll be stuck taking care of him. But if he's gone, you're free to find someone else while you still can. Lucky you.”

Cathryn's fists clenched. “You hid the bug in the clothes.”

Jordyn gave a satisfied nod. “That's right. I did.”

Without warning, Kathryn's palm cracked hard across Jordyn's face.

Zoe stormed over and shoved Kathryn to the floor, rage etched into every word. “How dare you touch my daughter, you witch? Jordyn's right about you. That's what you get for marrying a useless man.”

A voice cut through the commotion. “Who are you calling useless?”

Gavin stepped forward and, without hesitation, slapped Zoe so hard she staggered. Blood welled at the corner of her mouth. Years in the military had left Gavin strong; a single blow made Zoe's cheek swell, her glare turning murderous.

Wailing, Zoe blurted out, “Why couldn’t you have died already?”

Cathryn hurried to Gavin’s side, her voice trembling. “Gavin, tell me— is he going to make it?”

Gavin’s jaw tightened. “It’s bad. We’ll only know more after the doctors finish surgery.”

Cathryn nearly lost her balance, but Gavin caught her just in time.

“Mrs. Brooks, you have to hold yourself together,” he said quietly.

Drawing in a shaky breath, she replied, “Go and talk to the doctors about his surgery. Don’t worry about me.”

Gavin gave a firm nod and hurried away.

Word of the crash spread fast. Liam, upon learning that Kathryn’s husband—who supposedly worked as a chauffeur—had gone off a cliff and might not survive, wasted no time getting to the hospital.

He found Kathryn at the entrance to the operating room, her face drained of all color. Rushing to her side, he reached out. “Cathryn, are you alright?”

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Cathryn recoiled from him, disgust plain in her eyes.

Unfazed, Liam tightened his grip on her arm. “Listen to me, Cathryn. I know this is hard, but honestly, he never deserved you. Maybe this is a blessing in disguise.”

Cathryn swung her hand and slapped him across the face. “Get lost—and stay away from me.”

Liam clutched his cheek, then pressed on as if nothing had happened. “How about we remarry? You wouldn’t have to be a servant or stay married to that old man.”

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Jordyn’s angry voice cut through the hallway. “What’s wrong with you, Liam? I’m your wife now!”

Without so much as a flicker of guilt, Liam shot Jordyn a cold look. “You said you could introduce me to Kestrel. Three months, and all I get are empty promises. I doubt you ever knew Kestrel.”

His voice hardened. “I’m done with your games. I want a divorce.”

Tears streaked down Jordyn’s cheeks as rage took over.

Zoe struggled to her feet, spitting her words through a swollen mouth. “Liam, if you dare leave Jordyn, I’ll make sure the whole Watson family pays the price.”

Liam barely recognized Zoe; the swelling had left her almost unrecognizable. His glare stayed sharp on Zoe and Jordyn. “I see now. You’re both liars.”

Jordyn stamped her foot, her voice shaking. “I’m not lying. I really do know Kestrel.”

Liam turned his back on her. “Then go and prove it. Get Kestrel’s codes. If you manage that, the Watson family will treat you like royalty.”

Jordyn bit down hard on her lip. “Just give me a week. I’ll track Kestrel down and have her hand over the codes.”

Cathryn watched the three of them, her expression unreadable.

She was Kestrel—the one they were all desperate to find. But she would rather destroy everything than ever let those three get their hands on her codes.

Ethan strode briskly into the hospital, his expression taut with urgency. “Ms. Moore,” he greeted, bowing his head slightly toward Cathryn.

Cathryn blinked in surprise. “Ethan? What on earth brings you here?” Andrew’s loyal secretary was the last person she expected to see in the corridor of the emergency ward.

“Karl was also in the car when the accident happened,” Ethan explained evenly. “I came to check on him.”

Cathryn's shoulders softened as she pieced it together—Ethan wasn't here for Damien, but for his colleague.

Across the waiting area, Zoe and Jordyn had already slipped out the side door like guilty shadows. The sight of Andrew's right-hand man had rattled them. Their part in the "accident" weighed too heavily, and they feared the storm that might soon fall on their heads.

Liam, however, lingered.

Spotting Ethan, his eyes gleamed—he didn't want to miss a chance to get close. Swallowing his pride, he approached with a business card pinched neatly between his fingers. "Good afternoon, Mr. Owens. Liam Watson, CEO of Watson Tech."

Ethan accepted the card, then fixed Liam with a frostbitten stare. "I heard you just now—saying Ms. Moore's husband isn't good enough for her. That it would be better if he were dead."

Caught, Liam forced a brittle laugh. "Cathryn is my ex-wife. She ran off and married an older man, and she even worked as a servant in some wealthy household. It embarrassed me. I... I spoke out of anger. Nothing more."

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Ethan's eyes narrowed, his tone sharpening to a blade. "Interesting. There might be... potential for cooperation, Mr. Watson."

Liam's eyes lit up. "I look forward to working with Mr. Brooks."

Ethan gave no reply, his expression unmoving. The silence pressed like ice.

Fearing he had offended Ethan, Liam quickly added, "Please pass my card to Mr. Brooks. I will personally visit the Brooks Group soon."

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To Liam, Andrew was a ghost in the business world, rarely meeting new people. Even slipping a card into the hand of Andrew's right-hand man felt like a triumph. If he could obtain Kestrel's codes and secure a partnership, Watson Tech's rise would be unstoppable.

After a long wait, the operating room doors finally swung open, and the lead surgeon for Karl stepped out with his mask lowered.

"The injured person was thrown from the car but caught by a tree," he said. "He's bruised, but not seriously harmed."

Cathryn exhaled, relief loosening her chest—at least Karl was safe.

But what about Damien?

Ethan stepped forward, his voice tight. "And Mr. Brooks?"

The doctor's expression hardened. "He's severely injured, and the surgery is still ongoing."

Cathryn's heart clenched like a vise. She clasped her trembling hands, whispering silent prayers.

Hours crawled by before the light above Andrew's operating room finally dimmed.

The lead surgeon emerged, his voice calm but grave. "The operation succeeded, but the wounds run deep. Infection is a risk in the coming days. Diligent care will be essential."

Cathryn nodded, steadying herself. "I'll look after him."

Ethan gave her an appreciative nod. "Thank you, Ms. Moore, for your willingness to take care of him."

A faint smile touched her lips. "Don't mention it. As Damien's wife, it's my duty."

"I must return to the office," Ethan said, adjusting his cufflinks.

"Wait," Cathryn called, taking a quick step toward him. "Could you arrange a meeting with Andrew for me? I need to see him."

She longed to hand the codes to Andrew.

Ethan hesitated, visibly troubled. Andrew had just been wheeled out of the operating room—what could he say?

“There will be a chance, Ms. Moore,” he assured her with a polite smile. “Be patient.”

Cathryn’s gaze sharpened. “Is it because he refuses visitors?”

Rumor had it Andrew was disfigured. A once-proud man, now scarred and crippled, would surely not want others to see him in such a state.

Ethan gave a reluctant nod.

Cathryn’s voice softened. “Then tell him this: I have something I must deliver personally. Please make sure he knows.”

“Of course,” Ethan replied.

When he finally departed, Cathryn stood in the corridor and let out a quiet sigh. She didn’t want to reveal her identity to those who were looking for her, and the one person she needed to speak to was out of reach.

Ethan’s promise sounded like a polite evasion. Would he ever deliver her message?

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Chapter 158:

Where was Andrew really? And how could she reach him?

For two days, Damien lay in the ICU while Cathryn kept vigil outside, her eyes burning from sleepless nights.

Gavin finally ventured, “Mrs. Brooks, please go rest. I will watch over him.”

She clutched Damien’s clothing like a lifeline. “I want to be the first to see him wake up.”

On the third day, Andrew was moved to a regular room. He lay beneath a web of tubes, his face crisscrossed with scratches from branches.

Cathryn's tears spilled unchecked. She had unwittingly brought harm upon him. If she hadn't gone to see Jordyn... If she hadn't urged Gavin to Crescent Ridge Highway... If she had realized sooner that Jordyn had planted a listening device...

She crumpled beside his still form, sobs shaking her shoulders. She had believed he was driving to Bluufburg to meet a lover. Yet there had been no woman in his car. She had misunderstood him horribly.

Her trembling fingers brushed his face. If he woke up, she vowed she would never fight with him again.

But when her fingertips touched his cheek, she recoiled. His skin was burning—heat rolling off him like fire under flesh. A post-surgery fever. A bacterial infection.

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The doctor's warning flashed through her mind. Cold fear jolted her. She shouted for a nurse.

The nurse hurried in, drew several tubes of blood, and vanished. Moments later, a team of doctors and nurses burst back into the room. After a rapid examination, their faces turned grim.

“The patient has contracted a highly resistant bacterial infection.”

Cathryn’s breath caught. “Then find out what bacteria it is,” she demanded, “and treat him with the right antibiotics.”

The doctor furrowed his brow as he took the report from the nurse, eyes narrowing on the figures. “This appears to be an uncommon strain. We will need to run more tests before we can be certain.”

Cathryn stiffened. Years ago, she had pored over Bettina’s medical books out of childish curiosity, and scraps of that knowledge surfaced now like fragments of a half-forgotten dream. Untreated bacterial infections could kill. Identifying the exact strain attacking Damien was no longer just important—it was vital.

“He is strong,” Kathryn murmured, as if the words could build a wall around him. “It might not be highly resistant bacteria.”

The doctor exhaled slowly, folding his arms. “I examined Mr. Brooks thoroughly. There is an old wound on his back—deep, poorly treated, and clearly infected for”

...some time. With injuries this severe layered on top, it is little wonder he has not regained consciousness.”

The words struck Cathryn like ice water. Damien had always carried himself with effortless composure, his face a mask of calm strength. She had never imagined that beneath it all, an unhealed wound had been eating away at him—silent and unseen.

“Olekgan Hospital is the finest in all Antaford.” Cathryn’s voice shook with desperation as she pleaded, “You must run the tests—you will find something. I know you will.”

The doctor’s expression remained professional, his tone measured. “We will do everything we can.” But the hesitation that flickered in his eyes betrayed the truth—he was just as uncertain of the outcome.

That evening, the ward doors banged open and the same doctor strode in, urgency carved into his features.

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“Mr. Brooks is infected with a superbug,” he announced grimly. “But we cannot yet identify the strain, nor which antibiotic will work against it.”

Cathryn’s knees nearly gave way. The nightmare she dreaded had come to pass.

“If we fail to find an effective treatment,” the doctor continued with a weary sigh, “Mr. Brooks may not last more than two days.”

“What?” A sharp voice cut through the room.

Karl—pale and unsteady—leaned heavily on a nurse as he staggered in from his own ward. He had only just regained consciousness, and now the first thing he heard was a death sentence for his employer.

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The doctor turned back to Cathryn, his tone grave. “For the next forty-eight hours, his family must stay by his side without pause. Keep his temperature down—buy us enough time to analyze the infection.”

Cathryn’s mind raced. Time. That was all that stood between Damien and death now. Protocols would take days; hesitation would kill him. She couldn’t afford hesitation.

Her thoughts leapt to Adrian. If anyone could help, it was him.

Cathryn spun for the door.

A hand seized her collar and yanked her back. Karl, his face flushed with fury, bracing on his injured leg, thundered, “Running off after trying to kill him?”

His grip was iron, his eyes blazing with accusation.

“I want to save him!” Cathryn cried, shaking her head, desperation spilling into every word.

“He only told you he was taking Crescent Ridge Highway!” Karl snapped, his voice raw with disbelief.

Cathryn shoved him away, her voice tight with urgency. “I will explain when I return.”

Before he could grab her again, she bolted—sprinting down the corridor.

“Stop her!” Karl roared, fury echoing after her. “She is the one who tried to kill Mr. Brooks!”

Hands reached out, but the elevator doors slid shut just in time. Pressed against the cool steel wall, Cathryn whispered a trembling prayer, “Please, Damien, hold on until I return.”

Back at Crownspire Villa, Cathryn fumbled for the number Adrian had left her and dialed with shaking fingers.

A young man’s voice answered. “Dr. Clarke has gone into the mountains for herbs. He will not be back for at least a week.”

Her heart dropped like a stone. A week. The word crushed the air from her lungs. Damien didn’t even have days.

“Which mountain?” she demanded.

“Ironwood. Near Bluufburg.”

Her jaw clenched. Then that was where she would go.

She booked the earliest flight, stuffing Andrew’s blood sample into her bag.

Just then, Karl’s name flashed on her screen. She answered the call.

“Here’s your chance to make it right,” Karl said icily. “Come back and take care of Mr. Brooks.”

“Let the nurses tend to him,” she snapped, ending the call before he could spew more accusations.

The cab sped toward the airport.

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Two days. That was all she had to track down Adrian, find the cure, and race back to Olekgan Hospital.

Karl stared at the dead line, seething. To him, the accident had happened only because Cathryn had leaked Andrew's route to Cara. And now, with Andrew's life dangling by a thread, instead of staying by his side, Cathryn had fled. She must be running because her crime had been exposed.

Karl dialed Ethan. "Before the accident, Mr. Brooks asked me to investigate Cathryn. Start with her call records from the past two days. And keep her under close watch."

"Consider it done," Ethan replied.

Karl was determined to uncover evidence of Cathryn's betrayal and make sure she paid the price.

By evening, the report landed in Karl's hands. His fists clenched.

He knew it. Cathryn had betrayed Andrew.

Later that night, Karl stepped into Andrew's dimly lit room, where Gavin and a pair of nurses were tending to him.

"You've done enough today, Gavin. Go back and get some rest," Karl urged smoothly.

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Gavin stretched, wincing at his stiff joints before walking out. "Age spares no one."

Karl's tone sharpened at Gavin's back. "Gavin, here's a piece of unsolicited advice. Don't forget where your loyalties lie."

Gavin froze mid-step, turning back with narrowed eyes. "What exactly are you implying?"

“Just a warning,” Karl replied, his voice cold as steel. “Don’t let Cathryn’s tricks blind you.”

“You have no proof,” Gavin snapped. “Don’t slander her.”

Karl’s lips curled into a grim smile. “Would I speak without evidence?”

A chill ran through Gavin. Was Cathryn really a plant sent by Cara?

Moments after Gavin left, Andrew stirred, his eyelids fluttering open. “How are you feeling?” Karl leaned forward, hope flashing in his eyes.

The nurse rushed over, checking Andrew’s vitals.

Karl watched the nurse’s face with bated breath until she shook her head. The fever still raged. The infection showed no mercy.

“Cathryn...” Andrew murmured, his voice slurred, half-lost in delirium.

Karl bent closer. “Mr. Brooks, do you recognize me?”

Andrew blinked, struggling for clarity. His voice cracked, his dry lips trembling.
“Where’s... my wife?”

Karl hesitated—then delivered the blade without flinching. “She ran.”

Andrew’s eyes snapped wide, shock and anguish tearing through what little strength remained. “Ran?” he rasped.

Karl’s voice cracked like a whip, each word laced with venom. “She did. The doctors said you’ve been infected with a superbug. Left untreated, you wouldn’t have lasted two days. Cathryn carried out Cara’s orders, so she fled.”

Andrew’s gaze drifted to the tubes snaking into his veins, memories surging back—everything that had happened before he blacked out.

Karl’s fists curled so tightly his knuckles blanched. “Cathryn has been Cara’s spy from the start. She fed Cara information, tracked your every step. That dump truck? It was no accident. It was waiting for you.”

A storm brewed in Andrew’s eyes—silent, but violent.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 161:

Karl let out a sharp, bitter exhale. “Cathryn always knew how to worm her way in. No wonder Cara chose her.”

Something flared in Andrew’s expression—a dangerous spark, quick and lethal.

Cara, at barely eighteen, had weaponized her beauty and sly wit to seize the title of Brooks family matriarch. And now Cathryn had slipped into Andrew’s world just as swiftly, weaving herself into his life with disarming ease—only she had gone further.

She had not merely taken the role of his wife.

She had taken his heart.

The more Andrew compared their paths, the more the parallels clawed at him—chilling, mirrored, and hauntingly alike.

“Even though Cathryn is your wife, Mr. Brooks, she’s never really cut Liam out of her life,” Karl said quietly, pulling out a small heart-shaped lock etched with two names.

Andrew’s eyes flicked over the lock. It was from the same shop where he’d once sent Cathryn to pick up a cake for him. Back then, Cathryn had told him all the locks were sold out.

Karl handed it over—and there they were: Cathryn and Liam, their names carved side by side.

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Andrew’s jaw tightened. Cathryn hadn’t been honest about the lock, and now the proof sat in his hands. Worse, her name and Liam’s were inscribed together on a lock meant for lovers who never parted.

“That night, she even checked into a room at the Olekgan Hotel with Liam...” Karl added, looking down, unable to meet Andrew’s gaze.

Andrew’s tone sharpened. “Do you have any idea what you’re accusing her of?”

“I’d never lie to you, Mr. Brooks.” Karl’s voice trembled.

Andrew went pale, the shadows in his eyes deepening. He suddenly remembered Cathryn mentioning she’d left her bag at the store where she’d bought him a tie that same evening.

With a weary shake of his head, Karl forced a grim smile. “Cathryn has a talent for getting people on her side. Even Gavin—who’s been loyal to the Brooks family for over two decades—has fallen for her tricks.”

A rush of blood surged in Andrew’s chest, and he coughed violently.

“You need to take it easy, Mr. Brooks.” Karl quickly patted Andrew’s back.

“Bring Gavin to me,” Andrew rasped, barely catching his breath.

Gavin hadn’t dared go home; he’d been waiting in the hospital lobby. The moment he got the call, he rushed up.

“You’re awake, Mr. Brooks!” Gavin exclaimed, relief in his voice.

Andrew’s expression stayed cold. “Did you follow Cathryn the whole way when she went back to Olekgan Mall for her bag, about two weeks ago?”

Gavin paused, thinking it over. “Mrs. Brooks went in alone. I just waited in the car.”

“Were you aware she slipped out the mall’s rear exit and caught a cab straight to the Olekgan Hotel?” Andrew’s complexion was ashen, his eyes like ice.

Surprised, Gavin stammered, “I had no idea...”

Karl chimed in. “Cathryn was gone for thirty minutes. Are you saying you didn’t notice?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 162:

Gavin's brow furrowed. "Mrs. Brooks told me she needed to buy something in the mall, so I figured it would take a while."

Karl's voice sharpened. "Thirty minutes is more than enough time for her to have a rendezvous with Liam at the hotel."

Gavin's eyes widened. "Karl, you can't slander Mrs. Brooks like that."

"You're awfully loyal to her, aren't you?" Andrew's voice was cold as he stared Gavin down.

Gavin fell silent at once, his head bowed.

Without another word, Karl pulled out his phone and played a recording. The audio captured Ethan speaking with the Olekgan Hotel's receptionist.

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“I’m Mr. Brooks’ secretary. Could you tell me who checked in with Liam Watson on June 2nd?”

The receptionist replied, “I just checked. It was a Ms. Moore.”

“Did you actually see her go upstairs?”

“Yes. Mr. Watson left the room key for her at the front desk. Ms. Moore arrived around 8 p.m., picked up the key, and went up by herself.”

Gavin couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

Andrew squeezed his eyes shut, pain washing over him. He couldn’t shake the memory of that night. Cathryn had come home after buying condoms, and he’d used the whole box with her. Now, just imagining Cathryn sleeping with Liam and then returning to him that same night made his stomach churn.

Suddenly, the monitor beside Andrew erupted in a shrill alarm.

“Doctor! Over here!” Karl shouted, slamming the emergency button near the bed.

“Get him to the emergency room, now!” The medical team burst in, moving quickly to take over.

Meanwhile, after landing in Bluufburg, Cathryn wasted no time. She headed straight for Ironwood Mountain.

On her way up the mountain trail, a few locals coming down warned her, “You know, summer brings out the worst of the mosquitoes up there. A girl like you could get lost—and out here, nobody’s coming to help.”

Cathryn understood perfectly well how dangerous the deep forest could be, but she couldn’t afford to hesitate. Damien’s life still hung in the balance, and she was his only hope.

Shouldering a pack with enough food and water for two days, Cathryn pressed forward into the wilderness.

Bettina’s study had always been a treasure trove—filled with astronomy, geography, and survival guides. Cathryn had spent her childhood devouring them, picking up the basics of surviving in the wild. All she had to do now was keep moving until she found Adrian.

With a general sense of where the rare herbs might grow, Cathryn pushed deeper, heading toward the heart of the mountain.

The trek was brutal. Mosquitoes swarmed, biting any patch of exposed skin, while sharp branches tore at her arms and legs. Still, she forced herself onward, refusing to slow down.

Five hours in, a flicker of hope sparked when she noticed traces of human activity on the forest floor.

But just as things began to look promising, the sky split open and unleashed a punishing downpour.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 163:

Rain battered the treetops, soaking her to the bone. The drops stung as they struck her skin, cold seeping into her limbs.

With no shelter in sight, Cathryn could only huddle against the rough bark of a tree, silently begging the storm to pass.

Night crept in, the rain showing no sign of stopping. The air turned sharp and chilly, and her soaked clothes clung to her like ice. Cathryn's body began to shake uncontrollably, each shiver a warning—hypothermia was setting in. She knew she couldn't hold out much longer.

Disoriented and barely able to think, she stumbled forward. Through the blur of darkness and rain, she spotted a makeshift shelter of straw, faint firelight flickering inside.

Relief washed over her.

Summoning the last of her strength, Cathryn dragged herself toward the promise of warmth.

"Who's out there?" a voice called as a figure stood, outlined by the fire's glow behind him.

Cathryn's voice trembled. "Adrian... Is that you?"

"Cathryn?" Adrian blurted in shock, stepping forward with wide eyes.

"Adrian!" Cathryn cried. She rushed into his arms and broke down in tears. In that moment, she knew Damien still had a chance.

"What brings you here?" Adrian asked, searching her face for answers.

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Everyone knew Ironwood Mountain's harsh terrain was brutal. Making it this far was unthinkable for most—let alone for anyone without real survival skills. Yet somehow Cathryn, a girl raised in comfort, had braved the mountain's dangers all on her own.

"Adrian, please save Damien. You're the only one who can..." Cathryn pleaded through her sobs.

She pulled a folded paper from beneath her clothes, its edges protected by a layer of plastic.

Even as she shook with cold and rainwater streamed off her, she clung to the report. It was perfectly dry—not a single drop had touched it.

Adrian smoothed out the sheet of paper, his face clouding as he read the blood test report. “Who does this report belong to?” he asked, his tone sharp.

Cathryn’s words tumbled out between sobs. “It—it’s Damien’s... The doctors said he caught a superbug, but they don’t even know what kind. None of the antibiotics are helping. They said he only has two days left...”

“Try to stay calm. Tell me what happened to him. How did he get hurt?” Adrian urged, gently guiding her—trembling and ashen—closer to the warmth of the fire.

Cathryn’s voice shook as she described how Damien had taken the whip for her, and how he had later gone over the edge on Crescent Ridge Highway.

Adrian rubbed his chin, eyes narrowing. “Crescent Ridge Highway, you say...”

Cathryn tried to swallow her cries, afraid of interrupting his concentration.

“I think I know what’s affecting him,” Adrian murmured. His eyes brightened with understanding, catching the firelight as it danced across his features.

Cathryn leaned in, desperation sharpening her voice. “What is it? What’s causing this?”

Adrian glanced at her. Her face was pale as a ghost, her soaked clothes clinging to her, her hands trembling. “Come closer and warm up for a moment. I’ll explain everything,” he said gently.

She shook her head, stubborn. “I can’t wait. Damien’s running out of time.”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 164:

Adrian let out a weary sigh. He shrugged off his coat and wrapped it around her shoulders. “The lash wound has festered too long, so yes—his body is carrying a superbug.

But the unrelenting fever isn't from that infection, and it isn't that the antibiotics have failed."

Cathryn's brow furrowed in confusion. "So what is it, then?"

Adrian's expression turned grave. "When Damien's car went off Crescent Ridge and crashed in the forest, he must have been bitten by a Blackfang Viper. That venom is tearing through him."

Cathryn stared at him, stunned. "You're saying it's snake venom?"

Adrian nodded. "This report shows bacteria in his blood, so the doctors at Olekgan Hospital assumed infection was killing him. But the real threat is the venom. No wonder nothing they've tried has worked."

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Panic spiked in Kathryn's voice. "I'll call the hospital right now. They need to give him antivenom."

Adrian tightened his grip on her hand. "You won't find a single dose of Blackfang Viper antivenom anywhere in Antaford," he said, his voice low.

Tears streamed down Cathryn's cheeks. "Then what can we possibly do?"

With a gentle touch, he ruffled her hair. "While I'm here, Damien still has a chance. But first, you need to change out of those soaked clothes. Let's get you off this mountain."

Knowing Ironwood Mountain like the back of his hand, Adrian guided her along a winding, hidden trail.

When they reached a small cluster of houses at the foot of the mountain, Adrian took out a slim vial filled with clear liquid. "This is what Damien needs—the Blackfang Viper antivenom. It has to stay cold, and it only works if it's given within twenty-four hours."

He slipped the vial into a padded, insulated case.

Without hesitation, Cathryn took the case and pressed it tightly to her chest. "Adrian, thank you. I have to go now."

Worry flickered in Adrian's gaze as he took in how pale she looked, her lips trembling from the cold. "There are poisonous insects higher up, and you're already chilled to the bone. You need to rest properly. Let me arrange for someone else to bring this back to Olekgan Hospital."

But Cathryn only clutched the case more fiercely, shaking her head. "No. This is my responsibility. I won't feel right until I see the antivenom injected into Damien."

A soft sigh escaped Adrian. “You’re exactly like your mother—stubborn right down to your core. Alright. I’ll find you a cart to get you straight to the airport.”

Before leaving, Cathryn pulled out her phone to call Gavin, determined to explain that Damien’s illness wasn’t from infection but venom—and to have him tell the doctors immediately.

But the call rang and rang without an answer.

Meanwhile, back in the VIP ward at Olekgan Hospital, Andrew finally regained consciousness, his head pounding viciously.

“Mr. Brooks.” Karl and Gavin hovered nearby, their faces tight with worry.

Andrew’s eyes swept the crowded room—doctors, nurses, assistants—but Cathryn was nowhere in sight.

“Where is Cathryn?” he asked, his voice weak, a rough whisper that barely carried in the quiet room.

Gavin stayed silent, his head lowered, while Karl’s eyes remained cold and unyielding.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 165:

“Tell me,” Andrew muttered, pressing a hand to his forehead as the veins at his temple throbbed.

Gavin answered in a low voice. “She left for Bluufburg.”

Ethan had already traced Cathryn’s movements—she had flown to Bluufburg.

Confusion clouded Andrew's face. "Why would she go there?"

Karl's expression didn't flicker. "Liam is in Bluufburg as well."

Gavin fixed Karl with a hard glare. "For all we know, it's just a coincidence. There's a tech expo taking place in Bluufburg right now."

With a curt shake of his head, Karl cut in. "Is it a coincidence Liam is trying to get her to marry him again?"

A sharp, unyielding glint flashed in Andrew's eyes.

Karl immediately held his tongue, shrinking back under the force of Andrew's furious glare.

Andrew's voice dropped, cold as stone. "Say that again, Karl."

Karl swallowed, nervous. "While you were in the ER, fighting to survive, Liam approached her. He told her you wouldn't make it and urged her to marry him."

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Gavin's frown deepened. "You're twisting things. Just because Liam is hoping for something doesn't mean she agreed."

Karl's voice hardened. "I'm twisting things? She slipped away to a hotel with Liam, didn't she? Instead of staying by Mr. Brooks's side when he was dying, she left, didn't she?" He sounded utterly certain.

Gavin faltered, unable to offer any defense.

Despite his frailty, Andrew clenched his fist, his entire body trembling with anger. The thought struck like a punch—Cathryn wanted to remarry Liam?

He reached over and knocked the love lock off the bedside table—the token etched with her name and Liam's.

It clattered to the floor and snapped apart on impact.

Just then, Gavin's phone buzzed. Cathryn's name glowed on the screen.

A shadow crossed Karl's face, and sarcasm crept into his voice. "What a surprise. Looks like you and Cathryn are closer than anyone thought."

Gavin bristled. “Go ahead and insult me, but don’t drag her name through the mud.”

A mocking smile twisted Karl’s lips. “So what exactly did she promise you? You act like she’s your employer, not Mr. Brooks.”

Gavin turned to Andrew, urgency tightening his words. “Mr. Brooks, I trust her. She wouldn’t lie to you.”

To Gavin, Cathryn was fearless and honest—never the sort to scheme behind someone’s back or play games with Cara.

A stormy shadow crossed Andrew’s face, his mouth set in a firm, unyielding line.

Gavin’s phone kept buzzing, Cathryn’s name lighting up the display.

Andrew glanced at the screen. An icy edge crept into his voice. “Hang up the call,” he said.

“Mrs. Brooks must have had something urgent to tell me,” Gavin murmured, a thread of tension in his voice.

Karl cut in, cold and sharp. “Urgent? More important than Mr. Brooks’s life? Someone who truly cared wouldn’t vanish to Bluufburg and cozy up to another man. She’d be here—every second—by Mr. Brooks’s side.”

“Hang up,” Andrew ordered, his cold gaze locking on Gavin.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 166:

Pinned under that cutting stare, Gavin ended the call without protest.

“Hand me the phone.” Andrew held out his hand.

Gavin obeyed, passing it over.

Andrew flicked it to Karl. “Get rid of the SIM.”

Karl snapped the SIM free, broke it cleanly in half, and tossed the pieces into the trash.

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A weary sigh escaped Gavin. With the phone dead, Cathryn had no way of reaching him now, and he would never know what she’d been so desperate to say. Perhaps that was for the best—at least Andrew would stop suspecting him of secret dealings with her.

Pain pulsed through Andrew’s skull, each throb sharp enough to split him open. He turned to the doctor, his voice rough. “Tell me straight. What’s really wrong with me?”

An uneasy mix of worry and frustration flickered across the doctor’s face. “Mr. Brooks, you’ve contracted a superbug. We’ve run every test we have, but we still can’t identify the exact strain. We’ve tried all available antibiotics, yet your vitals keep dropping.”

Andrew’s eyes turned to ice. “So the talk of my having only two days left is true.”

The doctor hesitated, wringing his hands as he tried to soften the blow. “You’re a strong man, Mr. Brooks. Maybe—”

“Choose your words carefully,” Andrew snapped, his voice cutting through the room.

The doctor dipped his chin, respectful and grim. “It’s true, Mr. Brooks.”

Bitterness crept into the corners of Andrew’s pale lips, forming the shadow of a smile. So this was it—he was going to die, and Cathryn had already left him behind.

Meanwhile, at Bluufburg Airport, Cathryn lingered at the boarding gate, her thumb hitting redial again and again. Gavin’s number rang into silence.

Karl’s line was dead too.

She hovered for a moment, torn over whether to call Damien himself. But the thought of waking him—or worse, hearing his voice and panicking—twisted her stomach. After several tense seconds, she shut off her phone and walked toward boarding.

Two more hours, and she would be racing through Olekgan Hospital’s gates, the vial secure in her arms and hope burning in her chest. If she could just get the antivenom to the doctors, Damien would have a fighting chance.

Adrian's warning echoed in her mind: keep the vial still. Too much shaking, and its potency could fade.

She pressed the insulated case to her chest, curling protectively around it, as if her own body could shield it from harm. This wasn't just medicine—it was Damien's last hope.

She gripped it so tightly her knuckles ached, huddled into her narrow airplane seat as waves of heat and chill rolled through her. The rain on Ironwood Mountain had left her with more than damp clothes.

Her lashes fluttered as exhaustion dragged her under. But even in sleep, her arms never slackened around the case.

Elsewhere, in the VIP ward, the air felt thick enough to choke. Too many people stood pressed against the walls, silent and tense.

"Everyone out," Andrew ordered hoarsely, the words scraping past his throat.

At Karl's curt nod, the hospital staff slipped out one by one, leaving behind a suffocating stillness.

Andrew drew his phone from the nightstand, his thumb hovering over Cathryn's number. For a long moment, he simply stared, his expression unreadable, before finally hitting call. There was one thing he couldn't let go of—the need to see her, to ask whether even a shred of her feelings for him had ever been real, so he wouldn't leave this world haunted by the question.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 167:

But only the hollow echo of an automated message answered him. “The wireless customer you are calling is not available.”

With a dry chuckle, Andrew let bitterness slip through. Cathryn and Cara—of course they were in this together. Cara wanted him gone, and so, it seemed, did Cathryn. What had he been clinging to all this time?

Later, when Cathryn's plane touched down in Olekgan, a sudden storm broke over the city, pounding the landing strip. She tried Gavin again, desperate for him to pick up, but the call went unanswered.

With no other option, she pulled up her hood, stepped into the rain, and flagged down a cab.

Back at the hospital, Andrew's phone buzzed again. Ethan's voice came through the line. "Mr. Brooks, Ms. Moore just landed at Olekgan Airport."

A chill settled into Andrew's gaze, his eyes hardening. So she had finally come back—straight from her secret rendezvous.

He forced himself upright, his voice cutting through the air. "Gavin, have the car ready. We're driving straight to the airport."

Color drained from the doctor's face. "You can't go, Mr. Brooks. Your body can't handle it—stepping out of this hospital could cost you your life."

Though every trace of color had fled his face, Andrew's stare was sharp and relentless. "Can you cure me if I stay in this hospital?"

The medical staff's silence was answer enough. They lowered their heads, shame weighing on their shoulders. They had held emergency consultations all night, even reached out to foreign specialists, but no one could explain the raging fever or the steady collapse of his body.

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Gavin moved quickly, helping Andrew into the waiting car.

As evening crept in, thick clouds choked the sky, and night seemed to fall too soon. Rain burst from the heavens, heavy drops swelling into a pounding storm as they neared the airport.

At the terminal entrance, Cathryn struggled to flag down a taxi, her arms aching as she waved. Not one car stopped.

She glanced at her watch—two whole days had already slipped through her fingers. The lack of news from Gavin gnawed at her. She didn't know what was happening with Damien. Getting back to the hospital fast was all that mattered, and she had to move now.

Instead of waiting in vain, she pressed the insulated case to her chest and charged into the rain. She would walk the whole way if she had to, calling for cabs as she went.

Rain hammered her like needles, soaking her until her clothes clung cold and heavy to her skin. She stumbled forward, half-blind, water streaming into her eyes.

Then the wind roared, shoving her sideways, tearing at her hair, until she went lightheaded and nearly lost her footing. The floodwater surged so high it sucked one of her shoes clean off.

At last, twin beams of light split the darkness ahead.

Heart leaping, Cathryn lurched toward the road, waving desperately. The car braked, spraying water—but no door opened.

Cathryn smacked her hand against the glass, desperation shuddering through the pane. Her breath fogged the window as she begged to be let in. Her own discomfort meant nothing—what terrified her was the antivenom pressed to her chest, its potency fading with every second in the cold.

This was Damien's last chance. She would rather collapse in the mud than let it fail.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 168:

Inside the car, Andrew stared at Cathryn through the rain-streaked glass. Her face was pale and dripping, her silhouette trembling in the storm.

Gavin's voice broke, soft with pity. "Mr. Brooks, the storm's raging out there. Please—let her inside."

A glacial stillness settled over Andrew's features before he said, "Drive."

Tension coiled through Gavin's fingers as they clamped the wheel, his foot hovering above the gas pedal.

Andrew's voice cut through the silence from the back seat. "Do you want to keep your job in the Brooks household or not?"

With a deep breath and visible hesitation, Gavin finally stepped on the gas, easing the car forward.

Cathryn was still gripping the door handle and hadn't braced for the movement. The jolt threw her off balance, sending her sprawling onto the slick pavement.

Instinct made her curl around the insulated case. Her knees and elbows slammed into the concrete with bone-deep force. Pain tore through her limbs, skin flayed, blood slicking her palms and shins.

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But fear for the case outweighed the agony. She scrambled upright, gasping, and checked it with frantic hands. Her bruised body had taken the impact, leaving the case untouched and intact.

Inside the car, Andrew's gaze stayed locked on the rearview mirror. Cathryn's small figure—blurred by rain—grew distant, a shadow fighting to stand against the storm. His face was set in stone, darker than the night swallowing her.

His skull pounded, each throb hammering behind his temples. Veins strained until it felt like they might burst. He clenched his fists in his lap, every muscle taut, forcing himself not to soften.

Cathryn had toyed with his feelings, two-timing him with Liam—sleeping with both of them on the same night. There wasn't a woman alive more vile. She had conspired with Cara and nearly sent him to his death on that mountain road.

And while death hovered over him like a vulture, she had gone to Bluufburg to meet Liam—already planning to remarry the moment Andrew was gone.

Andrew's fists tightened. In his entire life, no one had dared humiliate him—until Cathryn came along and shattered that record. His pulse hammered so hard it threatened to split his skull, darkness creeping in at the edges of his vision.

Meanwhile, Cathryn forced herself upright. Rain lashed the empty highway, blinding her, and not a single car passed.

There was no other choice.

Hugging the insulated case to her chest, she stumbled after the retreating car, her soaked shoes slapping against the pavement as the storm swallowed her whole.

In the mirror, Gavin caught sight of Cathryn—soaked, stumbling, yet forcing herself back to her feet to run after them. Pity tightened his features, betraying the conflict in his eyes.

“Mr. Brooks, please let Mrs. Brooks in,” he pleaded. “She’s barely holding on.”

Lightning flashed like steel, illuminating Andrew's face as his eyes snapped to the mirror—sharp, cold, and merciless. “Richard beat her for more than ten years, and she lived through it. She's stronger than you think.”

Cathryn's steps grew ragged, the world tilting around her. Her chest burned as if it were being torn apart from the inside. Days without a proper meal had drained what little strength she had left. She had trudged through the forest, braved the storm, and now forced her body to chase the car when there was nothing left to give.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 169:

In the mirror, Gavin saw her lurch forward, barely managing to stay upright. Panic shot through him, and he slammed the brakes.

The sudden stop jolted Andrew against the seat. His voice dropped to a lethal rasp. “You dared to hit the brakes without my order?”

“She’s down!” Gavin snapped, his eyes locked on the mirror.

A muscle jumped in Andrew’s brow as his gaze shot back to the rearview mirror.

There Cathryn was—slumped on the waterlogged road, not a flicker of movement left in her.

A shadow of conflict flickered through Andrew’s eyes.

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Gavin seized the chance. He grabbed an umbrella and bolted into the rain.

Cathryn was freezing, soaked to the bone, her face pale as paper. Even unconscious, her arms were locked tight around the case, as if guarding her own heartbeat.

Gavin scooped her up and rushed her into the car. Tires hissed as they sped toward Olekgan Hospital.

At the ER entrance, Andrew stood rigid, watching as Cathryn was wheeled inside. Then his legs gave out. A fit of coughing wracked his chest. Blood filled his mouth before darkness swallowed him whole.

“Emergency! We need help here!” staff shouted, their voices slicing through the already frenzied air.

Even on the gurney, Cathryn’s frozen fingers clung stubbornly to the case. Her lips trembled as she whispered, barely audible, “The antivenom... Save Mr. Brooks...”

A doctor gently pried the box from her grip and snapped it open.

Nestled inside was a single, precious vial.

The medical staff sprinted the vial to the lab. Within minutes, the results came back—confirmed as antivenom for the Blackfang Viper.

The chief doctor, an elderly man with silver hair, straightened in sudden realization. “This wasn’t a bacterial infection at all. Mr. Brooks was poisoned by a Blackfang Viper.”

“Prepare the injection—now!” the doctors barked, surging into motion.

Moments later, the antivenom Cathryn had carried across cities was coursing through Andrew’s veins.

On the monitor by his bedside, the jagged red line began to settle, its frantic peaks slowly easing into a steady, measured rhythm.

Relief passed through the room in a shared glance, as if everyone had finally remembered how to breathe. From the brink of death, Andrew had been hauled back to life.

“How did that girl know to bring Blackfang Viper antivenom?”

“Could she have ties to Adrian Clarke? Everyone knows the Clarkes are the only ones in Olekgan capable of making it.”

“Mr. Brooks was lucky—getting the antivenom at the last second like that.”

“And we owe that girl everything. If it weren’t for her, Mr. Brooks wouldn’t have made it through the night.”

A wave of relief rolled through the ward as doctors and nurses finally allowed themselves to exhale. Andrew’s survival meant their reputations—and their careers—were safe.

In the emergency room next door, Cathryn lay motionless in a hospital bed, pale and overlooked.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 170:

“Doctor! Over here—save her!” Gavin barked, his voice sharp as he pointed toward Cathryn’s limp figure.

A few doctors shuffled toward the room, dragging their feet as if the urgency had already passed.

Gavin's eyes burned with sudden, fierce rage. "She's Mr. Brooks's wife. Neglect her, and you'll have hell to pay."

The medical team went still, shock rippling through them. This fragile, battered young woman—she was Andrew's wife?

No one dared waste another second. They hurried in to examine her.

The findings made their stomachs drop. Cathryn's fever had spiked past 104°F, and her entire body was marred by wounds. Angry insect bites peppered her arms and legs. Her feet were torn open by deep punctures, and her skin had been flayed raw by thorns and weeds. Her knees and elbows were shredded down to bloody flesh.

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"Where has she been to come back like this?" one doctor gasped, staring at Cathryn as if she had crawled straight out of hell.

Gavin's expression hardened to stone. Cathryn had called him again and again, begging for help—yet he hadn't answered. He hadn't been there.

And now she had suffered all of this.

With a strangled sound, Gavin's palm cracked across his own face, sharp and punishing.

The venom had sunk too deep, threading its way into Andrew's very organs. He lay motionless—pale and still—as though even the act of waking was too heavy a burden.

Karl stood rigid at the bedside, shoulders drawn tight, worry carved into the lines of his face.

“The infection in Mr. Brooks's system has been festering for some time,” the doctor said gravely. “On top of that, the Blackfang Viper's bite delivered a severe toxin. His body is weakened, but the worst has passed. All he needs now is time.”

Gavin's voice was low, heavy with the weight of what might have been. “If Mrs. Brooks hadn't returned with the antivenom when she did, nothing could have saved Mr. Brooks.”

The words struck Karl like a blow.

“Mrs. Brooks braved Bluufburg to beg Dr. Clarke for help,” Gavin continued, his jaw taut with restrained fury. “And what did she get in return? Accusations that she was sneaking

off to her ex-husband. Orders sent out to every cab driver in Olekgan not to pick her up—forcing her to stumble through the storm until she collapsed with pneumonia.”

Karl’s face burned with shame. His fury had blinded his judgment and nearly delayed the delivery of the antivenom. If Andrew had died because of his interference, there would have been no forgiveness.

“It was Mrs. Brooks who saved her husband,” the doctor said firmly, leaving no room for argument.

Karl’s throat tightened. Pride flared, desperate for defense. “If not for Cathryn, Mr. Brooks wouldn’t have been poisoned in the first place,” he bit out, each word forced through clenched teeth. “She leaked his schedule to Cara. Saving him now is nothing more than penance.”

Gavin’s gaze sharpened, cutting through him like steel. “And you condemn her on the strength of a few photographs? That is what makes you worthy to stand at Mr. Brooks’s side?”

Karl trembled with anger. Yet even as he bristled, doubt gnawed at him.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 171:

If Cathryn truly had aligned with Cara, why would she gamble her life to obtain the antivenom? Why would she endanger Andrew—only to race back with the one thing that could save him? It didn't make sense. There had to be something more.

Gripping his crutch, Karl turned and hobbled from the ward, the weight of suspicion still gnawing at him. He would find the truth, one way or another. Until he

...unearthed it—every meeting, every word exchanged between Cathryn and Cara—he would not rest.

Inside the room, the doctors administered another treatment to Andrew.

“When will Mr. Brooks wake?” Gavin asked, his eyes fixed on the monitors.

“The venom has been neutralized,” the doctor assured him. “The infection is under control. By tomorrow, he should regain consciousness.”

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Relief unfurled in Gavin’s chest. Once Andrew woke, he would clear Cathryn’s name. He had no proof yet, but a woman who had stared down death for Andrew could not possibly be a traitor.

The doctor—wary after witnessing the heated exchange between Karl and Gavin earlier—added a warning. “Even if Mr. Brooks wakes, his condition will remain fragile. The worst thing for him now is emotional upheaval. Wait before telling him anything that might unsettle—or excite—him.”

“Even good news?” Gavin asked, brows furrowed.

“Especially that,” the doctor said. “Joy can strain the heart, too. Give it time.”

Gavin sighed. “Very well.”

The following morning, Andrew's lashes fluttered, and the world swam into focus. His body still ached, but the suffocating weight had lifted, replaced by a strange, unfamiliar lightness.

He scanned the room—doctors and nurses blurred around him—but the one he sought wasn't there.

No Cathryn.

A dull shadow crossed his eyes.

"Thank God you're awake!" Gavin's relief spilled out, his face breaking into rare brightness.

The medical team stirred with quiet excitement. Losing Andrew in their care would have destroyed them.

Andrew glanced down, surprised to find most of the tubes and wires gone.

"You were bitten by a viper," Gavin explained quickly. "The antivenom worked. You're safe now, though you must rest."

Andrew inclined his head faintly, then turned his gaze to the medical staff. “You did well uncovering the cause. I will see that the director knows. You will be rewarded.”

Gavin started, “Actually, it was Mrs. Brooks who—”

“Do not mention her,” Andrew snapped, the words cutting like a lash.

The very sound of her name tightened his chest, dragging him into a fit of harsh coughing.

The doctor shot Gavin a sharp, warning glance. “No strain. Let him rest.”

Gavin swallowed the truth and held his tongue.

By the next day, Andrew’s strength had returned. With a touch of feigned casualness, he asked a nurse, “How is Ms. Moore?”

“Ms. Moore?” the nurse echoed, brows knitting in surprise.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 172:

“The woman who was brought in after collapsing two nights ago,” Andrew clarified.

The nurse’s expression softened, almost pitying. “She’s in rough condition. She took a hard beating from the storm and developed severe pneumonia. She hasn’t regained consciousness.”

Andrew’s jaw tightened. “That serious?”

The nurse gave a slow nod, then hesitated. “What unsettled us most were the wounds all over her body—as if she’d been wandering the wilds for days.”

The wilds.

Andrew's fist curled at his side. The thought of Cathryn and Liam slipping away together into some desolate place twisted like a knife in his chest. Both bound by marriage and needing to keep their affair hidden—where better to meet than somewhere no one dared tread? A hotel first, now the wilderness. Their relationship ran deep.

“Would you like to see her?” the nurse ventured. “She’s in the adjoining room.”

His voice turned sharp. “I have no desire to see her. Remove her from this floor. Place her elsewhere.”

The nurse studied him for a beat, then walked away without protest.

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This floor was reserved for elite patients—quiet halls, top physicians, limitless resources. One word from Andrew stripped Cathryn of it all. It seemed she was in for hard days after somehow offending him.

Soon, Cathryn was wheeled into the chaos of a general ward downstairs. The world there was different: six beds crammed into one room, the air thick with disinfectant and chatter, men and women separated only by thin curtains.

When Gavin returned to the VIP floor and found Cathryn's bed vacant, unease knotted in his chest. A few questions later, the truth hit him—she had been sent to the regular ward.

He knew what that meant. Cathryn—fragile, barely hanging on—had been cast into the very place that might break her completely.

He went straight to Andrew. “Mr. Brooks, you cannot treat Mrs. Brooks this way.”

Andrew's gaze was cold steel. “One more plea on her behalf, Gavin, and you will be out of a job.”

But Gavin stood firm, his voice steady and unshaken. “She risked her life for yours. She went to Bluufburg, tracked down Dr. Clarke, and brought back the antivenom that saved you. You're breathing today because of her.”

Andrew's eyes narrowed, his tone glacial. “You actually came up with such a fabrication—all to shield her?”

Gavin's voice trembled like a wind chime in a storm. “It's true, Mr. Brooks. Ask the attending physician—please.”

Andrew's reply was a low, controlled command. “Leave.”

Panic sharpened Gavin's words. "Mr. Brooks, this could cost Mrs. Brooks her life."

"Leave." The single syllable cut like a blade.

Andrew's jaw tightened. His face settled into an expression that allowed no argument. He cared about Cathryn's life—but did Cathryn ever care about his? She wanted him dead.

With a hitching sigh, Gavin stepped back and left the room.

Word of Cathryn's collapse reached Jordyn, who immediately grabbed her phone and called Zoe. "Mom, Cathryn is seriously ill in the hospital. This is the chance we've been waiting for. I can't get involved—I'm Mrs. Watson now. You have to step in."

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 173:

Zoe listened, a plan already forming. “I’ll go to the hospital right now.”

Zoe disguised herself and made her way into the inpatient department, where she sought out the head nurse and brought up Cara’s name.

Olekgan Hospital belonged to the Brooks empire. While Andrew held operational sway, Jorge possessed the majority of shares, and Cara enjoyed the leverage that came with that nexus. Zoe didn’t bother with pleasantries. “Cathryn is a problem for Cara. You understand what must be done.”

The head nurse’s eyes darted, quick and calculating. Andrew had instructed the staff not to give Cathryn special care. Now, with Zoe framing Cathryn as an enemy of Cara, the course of action was obvious.

Lowering her voice, the head nurse leaned in. “At the far end of the corridor, there’s a six-bed ward. The patients there are all men—five of them—hardly respectable company. Three have criminal records. One served ten years for rape.”

Zoe’s smile was all teeth and calm. “Perfect. Move Cathryn there.”

The head nurse nodded. "I'll arrange it right away."

"Do not tell Andrew or anyone in his circle where Cathryn is moved—especially not Gavin," Zoe warned.

The head nurse nodded. "Understood."

Zoe produced a slim envelope and pressed it into the nurse's hand. The nurse's face brightened almost instantly.

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Cathryn was moved that afternoon—away from VIP care and into a drafty ward at the corridor's end.

That evening, Gavin left Andrew's suite with one intention: to find Cathryn.

At the nurses' station, he asked, his voice steady with restraint that barely hid his fear, "Which ward is Ms. Moore in?"

The head nurse's expression hardened. "Mr. Brooks instructed that the information is not to be disclosed."

Gavin straightened, dignity and desperation braided together. “I am the Brooks family’s butler.”

The head nurse’s lips curved with contempt. “Mr. Brooks specifically said not to disclose it to his butler.”

Gavin felt the color drain from his face. He had completely lost Andrew’s trust. Andrew was wary of him to this extent.

Later that evening, at the far end of the wing—down a corridor where the lights seemed dimmer—a young nurse burst out of a ward, cheeks flushed. “Ms. Moore’s fever has gone through the roof. She has developed severe pneumonia—her lungs are compromised.”

The words struck like a blow. Once pneumonia took hold of the lungs, the outcome became a gamble.

Passing the nurses’ station, Gavin heard it and panic surged. He rounded on the head nurse, his voice low and dangerous. “Cathryn is Mr. Brooks’s wife. They just quarreled, and that’s why Mr. Brooks moved her from the VIP room. But if she dies, do you think you can handle the consequences?”

Silence fell. The head nurse’s hand trembled as she realized who the patient truly was. She quickly reassessed the situation.

If Andrew and his wife were on such good terms, why would he exile her to the general ward and instruct the staff to deny her even the smallest kindness? And beyond that—Cathryn had offended Cara, who certainly wouldn't let her have it easy.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 174:

The head nurse recalled the elegant, wealthy woman who had approached her earlier. That woman's loathing for Cathryn had been so sharp it seemed she would be satisfied only if Cathryn drew her last breath on a hospital bed.

The head nurse shot the panicking nurse a glare and said sharply, "Pneumonia doesn't escalate that quickly."

Catching the warning stare, the young nurse swallowed hard and stammered, “I-I misspoke. I’m just an intern, still learning.”

Gavin’s patience snapped. He seized

...the head nurse by the collar, his voice low and dangerous. “If anything happens to Mrs. Brooks, you’ll answer to me.”

The head nurse trembled, yet wore her defiance like armor. To her, Cathryn was marked—discarded by Andrew and despised by Cara. She couldn’t be saved.

A twisted smile tugged at the nurse’s lips. “I will accept whatever comes my way.”

Something about her insolence gnawed at Gavin. A head nurse should have wilted under such a threat, yet this one smirked as if she had protection. Someone powerful had to be pulling strings behind the curtain—which meant Cathryn might already be in danger.

Gavin released her and hurried upstairs to the VIP floor.

Inside the suite, Andrew’s voice was ice. “Don’t tell me you’re back to beg for Cathryn’s sake.”

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Gavin's expression was grave. "I fear soon she'll need no one's pleas at all."

Andrew's eyes narrowed, suspicion flaring. "What do you mean?"

"Down in the ward," Gavin replied, each word clipped, "she's been left among vagrants and criminals. And she's fighting severe pneumonia."

Andrew's fist tightened around the sheet, knuckles whitening. "How is she now?"

Gavin let out a hollow laugh, his eyes lowered. "Unattended. Forsaken. Left to die."

Andrew forced steel into his voice. "Then it's her punishment. Nothing more."

But Gavin lifted his gaze, steady and unyielding. "Mr. Brooks, I swear to you—she didn't go to Bluufburg to rendezvous with Liam. She went into the mountains to find Dr. Clarke. It was Dr. Clarke who discovered the truth—that you weren't suffering from infection, but from snake venom. Mrs. Brooks secured the antivenom herself, guarded it every step of the way, and brought it back to Olekgan."

A shadow crossed Andrew's face, his brow drawing tight. "She wanted me dead. Why would she risk her life to save me?"

A new voice cut through the tension, steady and edged with pain.

Karl, leaning heavily on his crutch, appeared in the doorway. "Because she never betrayed you. Cara orchestrated the whole scheme—every last thread of it was her design."

Gavin's voice cut through the heavy silence. "Karl? Where in the world have you been these last two days?" Everything had been so chaotic he hadn't even noticed Karl's absence until now.

Karl stopped at the foot of Andrew's bed, his expression somber. "Mr. Brooks, your wife never knew Cara. That meeting at the café was their very first—everything was staged by Cara."

Karl laid it all bare: how Cara had orchestrated the first meeting, gifted Cathryn the designer bag, then urged Cathryn to walk her to the café entrance—so the photographs could be taken and conveniently delivered to Andrew's inbox.

"As for the painting your wife gave Cara," Karl continued, "it was nothing more than a token of thanks for the designer bag."

Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 175:

Andrew's brow tightened. "But it was Cathryn who leaked my schedule to Cara."

Karl pulled out his phone and pressed play. A faint hiss of static gave way to a chilling recording. "Your wife was innocent. Jordyn planted a bug on her."

Andrew's frown eased, though not all the way. Somewhere deep inside, he had always known Cathryn would never betray him.

Gavin couldn't hold it in any longer. His voice cracked under the weight of urgency. "Mr. Brooks, if your wife doesn't get medical treatment right now, she will not survive."

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Andrew froze, the words slamming into him like ice water. Pneumonia—he had never realized it could be fatal.

“Downstairs. Now.”

Andrew threw off the covers, ignoring the stab of weakness in his chest, and forced himself upright. Gavin caught him before he staggered, steadying him as they rushed toward Cathryn’s ward.

Meanwhile, inside a stifling little room, Cathryn lay motionless on a narrow bed, her breaths shallow and uneven. She was the only woman among five other patients—and the men, hardly ill themselves, had been eyeing her since the night before.

To them, her presence was like a cruel gift dropped into their laps: a fragile beauty in a place stripped of dignity. Now, pale and wan, she resembled a tragic Sleeping Beauty—vulnerable to the wolves circling her bed.

Temptation began to overtake hesitation.

I can't help polish or rewrite a scene that depicts an attempted sexual assault in a sexualized way. What I can do is rewrite it to keep the same plot beats and tension (they target Cathryn, the door gets locked, Andrew arrives and rushes down the corridor) while removing the explicit sexual content.

"She's been here two days. No visitors," one man muttered, his voice low and predatory. "Probably has no one."

"She's fading fast," another sneered. "Won't last the night. If she's going anyway, what's it matter if we take what we want first?"

Lecherous laughter rippled through the room. A greasy-faced man rubbed his hands together as he edged closer. "Who's going to stop us? No one will care what happens to her. Who's first?"

"Like an angel," someone breathed. "Prettier than half the women on screen."

One by one, they closed in, their eyes raking over Cathryn's fragile form.

A middle-aged man—Earl Thompson—stepped forward without shame. He yanked back her blanket and stared, his grin widening. "Barely twenty, maybe. Can you believe our luck?"

A gray-haired man shoved to the front with grotesque eagerness. "I'm the eldest here. I go first."

“Lock the door,” Earl snapped, hunger twisting his face.

The gray-haired man obeyed, sliding the bolt into place before turning back toward the bed. His hands shook as he reached for Cathryn’s gown, his eyes glittering with intent.

“Quit wasting time,” Earl spat. “There are four of us waiting.”

“I’ll go first.” A young man pushed past the others, stripping off his shirt as he climbed onto the bed.

And at that precise moment, the elevator doors slid open, and Andrew strode out.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 176:

Doctors and nurses hurried after him, panic threading their voices. “Mr. Brooks, you mustn’t push yourself—your body can’t—”

Andrew barely heard them. His heart pounded, every beat screaming Cathryn’s name. He couldn’t waste another second.

“Where is my wife?” His voice came out raw, frantic.

The head nurse hesitated—too long. “I... I don’t recall. Let me check the roster.”

Her delay was deliberate.

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Gavin's hand shot out, gripping her by the collar, fury flashing in his eyes. "Mr. Brooks is here. Enough games."

The head nurse flinched and pointed down the corridor with a trembling finger.

Andrew didn't wait. He ran—every muscle protesting—until he reached the door.

He grabbed the handle.

It wouldn't turn.

It was locked.

Through the narrow glass pane, his world shattered: five men clustered around a bed, their laughter coarse and vile, while Cathryn lay defenseless in their midst. She was sprawled across the mattress, her skin ghostly pale, her gown torn open to expose her trembling chest. The air reeked of sweat and lust, the circle of men looming over her like wolves around wounded prey.

Andrew's vision went red. His fists clenched so tightly his knuckles cracked, fury thrumming through every vein.

A harsh rattle shook the doorknob. The head nurse's voice—sickly sweet with false concern—drifted down the corridor. “Earl—what are you doing in there? Open this door!”

The interruption snapped the men's attention around. Earl turned with a snarl, striking the young man hovering over Cathryn. “I told you to be quick. Now look—you've roused suspicion!”

The young man went ashen, his lips quivering. “W-what do we do now?”

“Block the door,” Earl barked, his voice like a lash. “Let us have some fun first.”

Yanking up his trousers, the young man stumbled to the entrance and braced his back against the glass-paneled door.

Andrew's jaw set. His face hardened into stone.

One brutal kick thundered against the door, rattling it on its hinges. The head nurse shrieked and crumpled to the floor.

Gavin seized her by the arm and snarled, “Get the keys. Now!”

With a squeal, the head nurse scrambled down the corridor, her shoes skidding on the tiles.

From inside, the young man at the door shouted, his voice cracking, “Hurry up—I can’t hold them off forever!”

Earl stripped off the last of his clothing with grotesque triumph. “Suck it up and hold the damn door. She’s mine.”

Something in Andrew snapped. He drew a ragged breath, teeth bared, and bellowed, “Out of my way!”

He hurled himself at the door like a battering ram.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 177:

Karl lurched forward on his crutch, trying to catch him. “Mr. Brooks, wait—the keys are coming! You’ve only just woken up. Don’t throw your strength away!”

A doctor’s frantic voice rose over the chaos. “Mr. Brooks! The venom’s been purged, but traces remain. If your heart pounds too hard, it will spread—don’t risk it!”

Gavin clamped onto Andrew’s arm, desperate to hold him back. “Let me bring men to break the door. You don’t need to—”

But Andrew’s fury was a blade—sharp and unyielding. His voice dropped into a deadly growl.

“Move!”

Andrew’s presence hit the corridor like a thunderclap—so fierce, so unyielding—that no one dared stand in his way. People shrank back in silence, clearing a path.

With a single brutal kick, Andrew blasted the ward door open.

The crash was deafening. The man bracing it behind the door was thrown off balance, slamming into the nearest bedframe before crumpling with a groan, clutching his head.

What Andrew saw inside set his blood on fire. Cathryn lay helpless on the bed, surrounded—men crowding in far too close, hands reaching, voices thick with filth.

The commotion snapped their attention to the doorway—too late.

Andrew stormed in like a tempest. His fist drove into the ringleader's face before the man could even process what was happening.

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At the same moment, Gavin's men flooded in behind Andrew, bodyguards filling the room in a wall of force.

Andrew tore off his jacket and wrapped it around Cathryn, shielding her with a sharp, protective sweep. His gaze—razor-edged—cut across the room. His voice fell like ice. "Make them disappear."

Terror tore through the men. One sagged to the floor, shaking; another stumbled backward, eyes wild. “We’re patients,” one of them whimpered. “Old, weak, sick—”

Gavin’s voice cracked like a whip. “Patients? When you were crowding Mrs. Brooks, you were neither weak nor sick.”

The ringleader clung to the bedframe and shouted hoarsely, “We didn’t do anything! You can’t punish us for nothing!”

Andrew’s stare settled on him—dark, merciless. “You’ll answer for what you tried to do.”

“Yes, Mr. Brooks,” the bodyguards replied.

They dragged the men out as their screams and protests echoed down the hall, swallowed by the chaos outside.

The head nurse appeared then, keys jingling in trembling hands—just in time to see the disgrace hauled away. She froze, shrinking back into the crowd, fear written across her face.

Andrew, still holding Cathryn close, turned his icy stare on the head nurse. “You put my wife in this ward?”

The head nurse stammered, “I only followed your orders, Mr. Brooks. And I didn’t know she was your wife...”

Gavin’s voice lashed at her. “Liar. I told you myself she is Mrs. Brooks, and you still refused to tell me her ward. You said Mr. Brooks forbade it.”

Andrew’s fist clenched, joints cracking with fury. “When did I ever give such an order?”

Gavin’s eyes widened as the truth landed. “You never said that?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 178:

Only then did Gavin understand—Andrew might have spoken with contempt, might have moved Cathryn out of the VIP suite, but he would never—not once—abandon her to danger.

Gavin drove his foot into the head nurse's side, his tone venomous. "Who put you up to this?"

Shaking on the floor, she blurted, "It was... it was Cara. She hates Cathryn..."

Gavin's gaze snapped to Andrew. Proof—clear as daylight. Cathryn had no alliance with Cara. She was Cara's victim.

Gavin then shot a look at Karl, who stood to the side, regret etched into his face. He had nearly brought harm upon Cathryn.

Andrew's expression darkened to shadow, his anger turning cold and sharp. Cara's name tasted like poison. He already knew she was the mastermind. A snake like her would never dirty her own hands—she'd pull the strings, let others do the filthy work, and ensure the blame could never be traced back to her.

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Gavin moved with the same certainty. He yanked out his phone and shoved a photo of Jordyn at the head nurse. “Was it this woman?”

The head nurse shook her head frantically.

Gavin swiped. Zoe’s face filled the screen.

The nurse stared, then nodded quickly. “Yes. It was her.”

Andrew’s jaw tightened, teeth grinding. “She’s courting destruction.”

The head nurse crumpled to her knees, weeping. “Mr. Brooks, I thought you and your wife despised each other. I thought—”

Andrew’s hold on Cathryn tightened, his voice low, dangerous, and absolute. “Whether we quarrel or not, she is still my wife. That will never change.”

The head nurse collapsed completely, sobbing against the floor, her folly laid bare. She had believed Andrew’s marriage was fragile, little more than a formal tie, but...

...the depth of his devotion shattered that assumption in an instant.

A flurry of white coats and urgent footsteps filled the corridor as doctors wheeled a gurney toward them.

Gavin leaned in, his voice sharp with purpose. “Mr. Brooks, we need to take Mrs. Brooks into surgery immediately.”

Andrew bent low and eased Cathryn onto the bed with painstaking care. Thunder darkened his expression, his tone ice-cold. “If she does not survive, Olekgan Hospital will answer for it.”

The medical staff didn’t dare waste another breath. The wheels rattled as they rushed Cathryn through the swinging doors of the operating theatre.

The director—already warned of the disturbance—hurried down the hallway. Spotting Andrew, he straightened his coat and bowed slightly. “Mr. Brooks, I am entirely at your disposal.”

Andrew’s gaze cut like a blade, pinning the head nurse who had collapsed to the floor. His voice dropped into lethal calm. “She is dismissed. She is not to step foot in Olekgan again.”

The head nurse blanched, as if the ground had fallen away beneath her. Years of ambition—her title, her pride—crumbled in a heartbeat.

“Please... please, Mr. Brooks, forgive me!” She crawled forward, clutching at his trouser leg with trembling hands, desperation staining every word.

Andrew’s patience was granite. He shook her off with a sharp kick, his eyes glinting like obsidian. “No one touches my woman and walks away unscathed. Etch that into your memory.”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 179:

Cathryn’s condition had worsened enough to require the ICU, where machines hummed in sterile vigilance. Outside the door, Andrew stood rigid—an unmoving sentinel.

The physician's expression was bleak. "Her pneumonia went untreated for too long. It's progressed into critical respiratory failure. Whether she makes it through the night... depends on her will."

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Andrew didn't take his eyes off the closed door. His fists tightened until bone strained against skin, the crack of his knuckles puncturing the stillness. Every bit of this was on him.

A step behind, Gavin exhaled softly, the weight of his sigh carrying unspoken reproach.

Andrew cut him a sharp look. "Say what you came to say."

Gavin hesitated, then lowered his voice. "Mr. Brooks, when you were in the ICU unconscious, Mrs. Brooks never left your side. For two days, she stayed there—without food, without water. When the doctors said you might not survive, she marched into Ironwood Mountain through the storm to beg Dr. Clarke for the antivenom..."

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Gavin didn't need to recount what happened after that.

Cathryn had staggered through the rain, clutching the vial of antivenom like salvation as she tried to flag down a car in the middle of the storm. Andrew—misjudging her then—had stopped beside her but refused to let her in. Her pleas had fallen on deaf ears, her grip on the door handle desperate. Out of spite, he had even ordered the driver to speed off, leaving her broken and bloodied on the road.

Regret scorched through Andrew, sharp enough to hollow his chest. If only he had let Cathryn into the car in time. If only he hadn't sent her to the general ward that day, where Zoe and Jordyn had seized the chance to sabotage her...

"Mr. Brooks," Gavin urged gently, "your body is still weak. Let me stand guard here—you need to rest."

But Andrew remained immovable, his gaze pinned to the ICU door as if sheer will alone could pull Cathryn back to him.

Gavin recognized the futility of arguing and fell silent, staying beside Andrew without another word.

At length, Andrew's voice broke the hush. "Bring Karl."

Gavin stiffened. Karl—the one who had unconsciously fanned the flames at every turn—would face the consequences now. "Mr. Brooks, he was misled. He—"

The words died on his tongue when Karl appeared of his own accord.

Without his crutch, Karl moved slowly, each step deliberate, until he stood before Andrew with his head bowed. “Mr. Brooks.” He had come prepared to pay the price.

Andrew’s voice was ice. “You have forgotten the rules of service.”

Shame roughened Karl’s tone. “I am unworthy of my post. Allow me to resign.”

Andrew turned slightly away, his face unreadable. “You will go abroad. Train under our overseas branches.”

Karl lifted his head, startled. “You are not dismissing me?”

“If you prove yourself, you may return,” Andrew replied, clipped and cold. “If not, then remain overseas. Build Brooks Group’s influence there—you will not set foot back here.”

A flare of determination lit Karl’s eyes. “As long as I may serve you, I will go wherever you send me.”

Andrew’s gaze flicked once more to the ICU door.

“Mr. Brooks,” Karl ventured cautiously, “you instructed me to look into Zoe’s past. My investigation is nearly finished.”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 180:

Andrew’s eyes sharpened, suspicion coiling there.

“I worked with Ethan and Mark Spencer abroad,” Karl added quickly. “The findings are credible.”

The mention of Ethan steadied Andrew’s doubts. He gave a short nod. “Very well. I will confirm with Ethan myself.”

Karl inclined his head deeply. “Take care. Whatever lies ahead, my life is yours to command.”

Karl left without another word, and the corridor quieted again.

Gavin lowered his eyes, silent.

Andrew studied Gavin with a sidelong glance. “You are too soft-hearted. You still shield him, even after he wronged you before. He is half your age.”

A faint smile tugged at Gavin’s mouth. “He reminds me of my own boy. At that age, with power at his fingertips, arrogance and recklessness are inevitable. A few more years of discipline will carve him into steel.”

Andrew’s voice darkened. “When did you realize my wife was not Cara’s pawn? When did you know she risked her life to save—”

“I did not know,” Gavin answered plainly.

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Andrew's eyes narrowed. "She never confided in you?"

"Never," Gavin said, shaking his head.

"Then why defend her and plead for her again and again?" Andrew demanded, each word a blade.

Gavin's smile lingered—quiet, assured. "Because I trusted Mrs. Brooks. She has a good heart. She would never ally with Cara. She would never betray you."

Andrew's hand curled into a fist at his side. Bitter truth clawed at him—his butler had placed more faith in Cathryn than he, her own husband, ever had. Self-loathing seared through him.

And so Andrew remained, anchored at the ICU door, blind to exhaustion. His vigil was unbreakable.

Hours later, when Cathryn finally stirred awake, it was in the hushed luxury of a private room. Her body felt heavy, her head clouded with the weight of lost time. She blinked into the stillness. The hospital room was bright, comfortable—yet empty.

Her throat burned with thirst. Still, when she dragged herself upright and steadied herself against the wall, she found more than water waiting at the doorway.

The elevator chimed, and Damien stepped out.

Cathryn's heart leapt. Damien was awake. Adrian's antivenom had worked. The desperate, sleepless nights, the reckless journey—it hadn't been in vain.

But then, like a shadow blotting out light, the memory returned: the car crash, the cliff, the way his life had dangled by a thread because of her. Shame clamped down on her chest, and the joy in her eyes dimmed.

"Cathryn."

Andrew's voice—low, steady—caught her mid-step. Her body locked, the sound rooting her in place.

Andrew closed the distance, lifting his hand to brush a loose strand of hair from her face. His touch was gentle, his tone gentler still. "Is there anywhere you still feel pain?"

She flinched from the warmth of his fingers, retreating as though his tenderness burned. Her gaze dropped to the floor, her voice a frail murmur. "Cara learned your schedule through me. The car accident... all of it happened because of me."

Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 181:

The confession tumbled out like stones from a burdened heart, leaving her hollow—yet lighter. She had nearly cost him his life. Whatever thread still bound their marriage together... it ought to be cut here.

“I know.” Andrew’s eyes stayed fixed on Cathryn’s colorless face, the corner of his lips curving faintly.

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Cathryn lifted her gaze to him, bewilderment cutting through her voice. “I nearly got you killed.”

He only repeated, quiet and steady, “I know.”

She frowned, baffled. “Damien, has the venom scrambled your brain?” She had nearly been his undoing, and still he was smiling at her.

He folded her into his arms. His embrace tightened as if he meant to keep her there. “From now on, my life is yours,” he murmured against her hair. “Take it if you wish.”

Something in her chest loosened, then broke open. Trust—brittle and long denied—settled like warmth over old fractures. All her life, she had been boxed in by Jordyn’s lies and worn down by Richard’s indifference. For the first time in forever, someone had believed her.

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“I have proof of my innocence,” she said.

She went back into the ward and retrieved her clothes. From a hidden pocket, she produced a tiny black gadget—a listening device, compact and ordinary. “This was Jordyn’s handiwork,” she said, pressing it into his palm. “She planted it on me. She overheard my conversation with Gavin, and that’s how Cara tracked you.”

Andrew's gaze softened as he looked at the device. The moment his warm fingers brushed hers, he seized her wrist and pulled her straight into his arms. He bowed his head until his lips rested against the crown of her head.

"Cathryn, I'm sorry," he confessed, his voice muffled. "I should never have suspected you of colluding with Cara. I should never have thought you only came to my side with a hidden agenda."

Her whole body went rigid under his apology. She forced herself to speak, tasting each word. "You pushed me away because you thought I was Cara's pawn?"

He pulled back just enough to look at her properly. "Yes. What else could it have been?"

Her earlier foolish assumption sent heat rushing to her cheeks. She had thought his distance meant he'd grown tired of her—or worse, that someone else had taken his heart.

His expression shifted, slow mirth dawning. "You thought I had someone else?"

She dropped her eyes and pressed her lips together, warmth deepening in her cheeks.

He leaned close, his breath warm at her ear, his tone teasing. "So you were jealous."

She turned her head with a sharp little protest. “I was not.”

A soft laugh escaped him. The sting in her chest eased—because he still mattered to her, raw and unspoken.

“You don’t want to share me, do you?” Andrew asked, amusement threading through the question.

Cathryn glanced at him sideways, half defiant. “Don’t flatter yourself. You may go to whoever you please.”

His arms wrapped tighter around her, and together they toppled onto the hospital bed.

“Forgive me, please,” he said, his eyes glistening as they searched her face. “I will never suspect you again.”

Her resistance melted. She had never truly resented him; she resented herself. She had agreed to meet Cara without telling him, and because of her carelessness, he had nearly died. The debt was hers to bear.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 182:

“I never blamed you,” she whispered. “I blame myself—for hiding my meeting with Cara from you, and for believing her lies.”

Andrew’s jaw tightened. “Cara is cunning to the core. Promise me you’ll never meet her again.”

Cathryn’s nod was firm. “From now on, I will trust only you.”

He bent and brushed a kiss over her lips—brief, reverent. “So you have forgiven me.”

Her answer was small, earnest. “It was my mistake first. That’s why you misunderstood me.”

A flash of unguarded, boyishness softened his features as he pinched her nose gently. “If you want something, tell me. I’ll buy it for you. Don’t accept gifts from others—understood?”

“Understood,” she said.

“And one more thing.” He fixed her with an intent, almost comical stare. “That painting you gave Cara—bring it back to me. Anything you make belongs with me.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Even if I retrieve it, I won’t be giving it to you.”

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He made a mock-offended sound. “Who was it intended for, then?”

She answered plainly, “The original Midnight Lilies was given to me by Andrew. The replica should be given to him.”

A short laugh escaped him. “All right.” He sounded amused rather than affronted.

She blinked in surprise. “Since when did you get so generous?”

“Giving it to my brother or giving it to me is the same thing.” The faintest echo of their conversation about the cufflinks lingered—one way or another, it always ended up in his hands.

A cough disrupted the quiet. Cathryn pressed a hand to her ribs, frowning.

“Are you all right?” Andrew asked, worry sharpening his tone as he rubbed her back.

“My chest feels tight.” She frowned. She’d already checked the medications on the bedside table—everything was for pneumonia. It was probably from the storm, when she’d been soaked through.

That night came rushing back: clutching the serum, unable to flag a cab in the downpour. At last, a car had pulled up—a Maserati with the plate A00001—but the driver wouldn’t take her. Then it sped off, leaving her to slip in the rain and get badly hurt.

She ground her teeth at the memory. “That Maserati driver must think it’s amusing to watch me struggle in the rain. Owning a fancy car doesn’t make someone decent. They’ll get what’s coming to them.”

Andrew's eyes flickered with something like unease. It was a good thing she hadn't seen the face behind that window that night. If she had, she might have hated him for real.

"If I find that damn driver," she said, her voice low and certain, "I'll make that insufferable person pay."

With a steady hand, Andrew caught Cathryn's fist and gently unfolded her fingers before lacing them with his own. His voice dropped to a soothing murmur. "Maybe whoever it was couldn't stop—maybe something urgent forced them to drive off."

Cathryn's mouth twisted in frustration. "That annoying driver had already stopped! He looked right at me through the tinted glass, saw me holding the door, and then hit the gas just to throw me off. I went down hard—see? My knees and elbows are torn up. It stung like hell."

A flash of guilt tore through Andrew as his gaze lingered on her scraped skin. He crouched in front of her, exhaling softly over the raw patches as if his breath could soothe them. "If I ever find out who did this," he muttered, his voice edged with feigned steel, "I'll make sure he's ruined—kicked out of Olekgan and forgotten."

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 183:

Cathryn's eyes hardened. "And see to it he never marries—leave him withering and lonely for the rest of his life."

A shiver prickled down Andrew's spine at the severity in her tone. "That's brutal," he said quietly.

Her brows drew tight, her voice turning grave. "Because of that driver, I almost failed to save your life."

A jolt of realization ran through her. "How did I end up in the hospital in the first place? And how did you get the antivenom?" The memory of collapsing in the rain flashed back—damp and cold.

Andrew's gaze slid away, guilt shadowing his face. "Gavin was the one who found you—just in time."

Her frown only deepened. “Then where is he? Why isn’t he answering my calls? Did something happen to him?”

Andrew dragged a hand across his cheek, clearly buying himself a moment before answering. Gavin was fine. But Andrew’s own brutal orders were about to be exposed.

“He must have lost his phone,” Andrew lied quickly.

Cathryn let out a sharp huff. “That’s not like Gavin. He’s always dependable. I called over and over, trying to tell him you’d been bitten and that I had the antivenom ready, but no one picked up. I almost ran out of time to save you.”

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Andrew forced out a couple of dry, humorless chuckles. Of course she couldn’t get through—he’d ordered Gavin’s SIM card snapped in half and thrown away.

Cathryn asked, her voice softening, “How are you feeling? It’s only been a few days since the antidote—shouldn’t you still be under watch?”

Andrew drew her close, letting her cheek rest against his chest. “Listen for yourself.”

His heartbeat throbbed beneath her ear—strong, unwavering. Her tense expression melted, and a tiny smile curved her lips.

Curled against him like a skittish rabbit, she radiated a warmth that sent a flicker of heat through him. He was aroused. His thumb traced her pale cheek as he murmured, his voice low, “Cathryn, I’m poisoned.”

Her lashes fluttered. “Wait—didn’t the venom already clear?”

His eyes burned into hers. “Not that poison. I’m addicted to you. And you’re the only antidote.”

Heat flooded her cheeks, and she dropped her gaze to the floor. Andrew caught her chin with gentle fingers, tipping her face up before claiming her mouth.

The kiss deepened until the air itself seemed to tremble with warmth, the room pulsing with their shared heat.

Meanwhile, when news reached Gavin that Cathryn was awake, he wasted no time summoning Margaret.

Margaret had been on edge all day—first hearing about Andrew’s viper bite, then learning Cathryn had gone down with pneumonia. At Gavin’s call, she rushed over, suitcase in hand, packed with fresh clothes and every comfort she could think to bring.

“Where are Mr. and Mrs. Brooks?” Margaret asked the moment she stepped into the ward wing, her voice sharp with worry.

Gavin tipped his head toward a room at the far end of the hall. “They finally cleared the air. They’re in there, talking.”

Margaret’s brow creased as she hugged her coat tighter. “I heard it was a Blackfang Viper. My hometown has them too—vicious things. You’re certain Mr. Brooks is really all right?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 184:

“Yes,” Gavin said with quiet conviction. “Mrs. Brooks went straight to Dr. Clarke for the antivenom. The venom’s been neutralized, but there’s still residue working through Mr. Brooks’s organs. He’ll need close watch for a few more days.”

Margaret released a slow, shaky breath, color returning to her cheeks. “Thank goodness.”

“Just make sure Mr. Brooks doesn’t overdo it,” Gavin warned, folding his arms. “He pushed himself yesterday and wound up worse off than when he first came to.”

The poison still lingered like a shadow in Andrew’s system; any strain only drove it deeper.

Margaret inclined her head, her tone steady. “As long as I’m here, he won’t so much as lift a finger...”

She came to a sudden halt, eyes going wide. Wait—Andrew and Cathryn were alone? Just the two of them?

“Which room is Mrs. Brooks in?” Margaret demanded, tension sharpening her words.

“At the very end,” Gavin said, jerking his chin toward the hallway.

Without another word, Margaret shoved the suitcase into his arms and swept forward.

“Hold on—don’t storm in like that!” Gavin called after her, half exasperated. “You’ll only end up disturbing them!”

Margaret’s eyes flashed. “If I let them be, something’s bound to happen.”

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Gavin stopped short. “What on earth could—”

Her expression said it all, and his words died mid-sentence. He scratched his head. “Mr. Brooks is still recovering. Mrs. Brooks wouldn’t... she wouldn’t want intimacy with him.”

Margaret exhaled, shoulders sagging. “She wouldn’t cross a line. Mr. Brooks, on the other hand... I can’t vouch for him.”

Gavin put on a serious look. “I’ve known him since he was a boy. He’s always been reserved, self-controlled—he wouldn’t try anything reckless in a hospital room.”

Margaret's gaze sharpened like a blade. "He'd better not."

If anyone besides Cathryn knew how strong Andrew's desires could be, it was Margaret. Back when he and Cathryn had lived apart, she'd carried in more buckets of ice for his cold showers than she could count—the memory still sharp as glass.

Margaret didn't slow her stride, heading straight for the ward. Gavin broke into a jog to keep up.

The door was closed. Through the narrow pane of glass, Margaret and Gavin caught a glimpse of Andrew leaning over the bed, kissing Cathryn with fierce intensity. Cathryn had already begun to sink into the bed, her body relaxing without resistance.

Margaret shot Gavin a sharp look. "So this is the reserved Mr. Brooks you told me about?"

Gavin's palms were slick with sweat. Since when had Andrew become so unrestrained? Right here, in a sterile hospital ward, he was clinging to Cathryn, his lips pressed to hers as if no one else existed.

Cathryn, overwhelmed by the storm of his kisses, pushed back just enough to nip at his lip.

Andrew winced, his fingers brushing the sting. His eyes flashed with both pain and amusement. "Are you some kind of wildcat? Why are you biting?"

Her brow furrowed. “You still have toxins in your system. This isn’t the time. And need I remind you—we’re in a hospital?”

Andrew ignored her protest, burying his face against her chest with a low, stubborn murmur. “I won’t do anything to you. Just let me hold you tonight.”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 185:

She hesitated, unwilling to agree. Andrew’s tricks were dangerously familiar: first he’d claim a spot in her bed, then slide beneath the covers with wolfish ease—and before she realized how, the night would unravel into heat and tangled limbs.

“Mrs. Brooks, I am here to look after you!” Margaret’s voice rang from outside the door.

Gavin’s eyes widened in shock. Before he could devise a way to break up the scene, Margaret’s heavy knock followed.

“Mrs. Brooks, I am coming in!” Margaret announced.

The door swung open without waiting for permission.

Andrew and Cathryn broke apart in a flash, sitting rigid as Margaret’s cheerful smile lit up the room. “Oh, Mr. Brooks, you are here as well. What a coincidence.”

Cathryn exhaled, relief washing over her. Margaret had arrived just in time.

“Mr. Brooks,” Margaret continued, bustling toward the bed, “you should return to your room and rest. I will stay with Mrs. Brooks.”

Andrew’s jaw tightened. He had no intention of leaving Cathryn. He wanted her in his arms—especially after both of them had skirted so close to death. His chest ached with the need to protect her, to feel her warmth beside him through the night.

But Margaret perched on the mattress without hesitation, her smile unwavering. “Mrs. Brooks, you dislike sleeping alone, do you not? Allow me to keep you company.”

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Cathryn gave a small nod. “That would be fine.”

Andrew’s frustration burned in his eyes. How could Margaret be so dense?

Margaret ignored his glare and busied herself fussing with the blankets.

Reluctantly, Andrew rose, standing stiffly at the bedside until Gavin stepped forward. “Mr. Brooks, let’s not disturb Mrs. Brooks’s rest.”

With no choice, Andrew stalked out, snatching up the small listening device Kathryn had entrusted to him. He was determined to hear how Jordyn had tried to extract information from Kathryn.

Later that night, Andrew lay back in his own bed, a faint smile tugging at his lips. Kathryn was innocent—untangled from Cara’s plots. He could finally love her without restraint.

He switched on the device. Jordyn's voice slithered through, sharp with provocation.

Andrew's eyes hardened with rage. Someday, he vowed, Jordyn and Zoe would pay dearly.

Then Cathryn's voice reached him—soft, almost wistful. “The bed in your room is comfortable, is it not? Liam and I chose it together when we married. We slept in it for three years.”

The words struck like ice. Andrew's expression darkened, the faint smile vanishing. For half a year, he'd been with Cathryn, yet he had avoided this very subject: her three-year marriage to Liam. Yes, she had lost her virginity to him, proof enough that her previous marriage had been unconsummated. But sharing a bed—there were countless intimacies that didn't require consummation.

His imagination betrayed him. Every caress he had given her, every kiss stolen in the night—he now saw Liam in his place. A thousand and ninety-five nights. Could Liam truly have resisted her beauty, her allure, for so long?

Jealousy gnawed at him until sleep became impossible. So much could happen in three years.

Andrew didn't sleep a wink that night, and by morning, dark circles shadowed his eyes.

Cathryn, however, slept soundly for the first time in days. Exhaustion had dragged her into slumber, and with Margaret at her side—and her bond with Andrew mended—she finally found peace.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 186:

When morning came, Cathryn washed and emerged refreshed, only to find Damien standing there, his face dark, his eyes rimmed with sleeplessness. She assumed his temper stemmed from being banished from her room the night before.

Turning to Margaret with a faint smile, Cathryn said, “Go ahead and have breakfast first.”

Margaret's eyes lingered on Andrew, sharp with suspicion, before finally sliding to Cathryn.

Cathryn caught the hesitation and leaned in, her voice a quiet reassurance. "It's fine. I know what I'm doing."

Only then did Margaret retreat, though her reluctant footsteps betrayed her concern.

Cathryn moved closer to Andrew, her tone hushed. "We can't have sex here. Let's wait until you're fully recovered, and then we can go home."

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But Andrew's gaze didn't waver. His eyes—dark and searching—pinned her in place. "You promised me honesty, Cathryn. Always. Didn't you?"

Cathryn nodded. "Yeah."

Without a word, Andrew reached into his pocket and revealed the small listening device. A click, a faint hum—and Cathryn's words, meant to provoke Jordyn, played back.

Cathryn froze, blood draining from her face. She had never imagined Jordyn would start recording the moment they sat down. Her little ploy, meant only to needle Jordyn, now lay bare before Damien. Her throat tightened. “Let me explain.”

His expression was unreadable, his eyes fixed on her as if he could peel back every layer of deceit. “Then explain.”

She drew a steadying breath, choosing her words with care. “If I told you that in all three years of my marriage to Liam, he never once shared my bed—that the things I said were only to provoke Jordyn—would you believe me?”

Andrew studied her for a long moment before giving a firm nod. “I would.”

Relief softened her features, a faint smile tugging at her lips. “From the very first night, Jordyn had her hooks in him. She whispered lies, wrapped him around her finger, and banned him from even setting foot in my room. And he obeyed. He never crossed the threshold, never touched the bed where a husband should have lain.”

Andrew’s expression brightened, the heavy mood lifting at once. He had always doubted it. With how gorgeous Kathryn was, if Liam had ever shared a bed with her, he would never have let her go untouched—never would she have remained a virgin until that night in the hotel.

Now that Kathryn had confirmed his suspicions, Andrew’s heart felt suddenly lighter.

Cathryn's features clouded with uncertainty. After a pause, she asked quietly, "You wouldn't mind if I really had slept with Liam?"

Reaching over, Andrew lifted her chin. "It wouldn't matter to me, as long as you aren't Cara's pawn. Whatever happened before doesn't change that."

Cathryn's lips curved into a gentle smile. She felt truly fortunate to have met Damien.

Drawing her into a loose embrace, Andrew said, "Let's promise to always tell each other the truth. No more hiding things, all right?"

Cathryn wrapped her arms around him and gave a small nod. "All right."

Meanwhile, Margaret finished her breakfast in a hurry and returned to the hospital room.

Andrew took a seat by Kathryn's bedside and carefully helped her eat.

Margaret felt relief wash over her when she noticed the two of them hadn't started kissing again in her absence.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 187:

After setting the bowl aside, Andrew turned to Margaret. “Make sure you look after her.”

Margaret gave a quick nod.

With a gentle hand, Andrew smoothed Cathryn’s hair and murmured, “I need to take care of something, so I won’t be able to stay long.”

He had learned Ethan had uncovered quite a bit of dirt on Zoe. Zoe and Jordyn had nearly cost both him and Cathryn their lives. There was no way he would let them get away with it.

The moment Andrew stepped out of the room, Gavin hurried after him. “Mr. Brooks, should we mention the general ward incident to Mrs. Brooks?”

“Don’t say a word.” Andrew came to a halt. He had already made up his mind to shield Cathryn from anything that could hurt her. Nothing and no one would threaten her safety ever again.

As far as Andrew was concerned, there was no reason for Cathryn to be haunted by that incident while she’d been unconscious. All he wanted was for her to live a comfortable life—blessed with joy, untouched by sorrow.

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Besides, he was the one who had transferred her to the general ward in the first place. If she ever learned the truth, she would never forgive him. Regret gnawed at him whenever he thought about it, and more than anything, he wished he could undo that decision.

“Have the director erase everything from that day,” Andrew ordered. “Get rid of the surveillance footage, and don’t let a single word slip out.”

“Understood.”

Andrew had called in top specialists for Cathryn's treatment, and she was recovering quickly.

One day, Margaret returned with the latest gossip she'd overheard outside. She couldn't help telling Cathryn. "Mrs. Brooks, something huge happened in the general ward a few days ago."

That immediately caught Cathryn's attention, and she set her phone down. "What happened?" Restless from being cooped up in the hospital, she welcomed any distraction.

Margaret lowered her voice as she took a seat beside Cathryn. "Word is, there was a girl over there who didn't have any family or friends visiting. They say she ended up sharing a ward with five men."

A chill ran through Cathryn as she listened. The girl's situation sounded dangerously grim.

Margaret's expression darkened. "It gets worse. Word is three of those men had criminal records, and one of them was a known rapist."

Cathryn's eyes widened in horror. "That's awful. I can't believe it."

Margaret let out a heavy sigh. "The poor girl never stood a chance. She was unconscious, and those men took advantage of her helpless state."

Gripping Margaret's hand, Cathryn's voice trembled. "What happened next?"

Margaret sighed and shook her head, her tone grave. "From what I heard, when the head nurse finally walked in, the girl's clothes were already gone, and the men were... well, you can guess the rest."

Even imagining it made Cathryn's stomach twist with fear. Her whole body tensed, and her voice barely came out. "Was she? Did they really...?"

Margaret spoke plainly. "They say the girl was vulnerable, and the men were predatory. What do you think happened? The girl was violated."

"Aaaah!" A horrified scream tore from Cathryn as she buried her face in Margaret's shoulder. She couldn't even imagine the kind of pain that girl had gone through.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 188:

Margaret wrapped her arms around Cathryn, her own voice heavy with sorrow. “No one should ever have to go through something like that. I hope she can find a way to heal.”

For reasons Cathryn couldn’t explain, a deep ache settled in her chest. Maybe it was because they were close in age, but she felt an overwhelming sadness for the girl’s suffering.

With a gentle touch, Margaret tucked a loose strand of hair behind Cathryn’s ear. “Thank goodness you stayed in the VIP room. The general ward is full of trouble. If you’d been there—someone as lovely as you—who knows what could have happened.”

A chill ran down Cathryn’s spine at the very idea.

Margaret quickly covered her mouth, regretting her words. “I shouldn’t say things like that. Someone of your status would never find herself in such a place, let alone cross paths with people like that.”

A wave of relief washed over Cathryn; she was grateful to have avoided such a nightmare. Her thoughts drifted. If Damien hadn't come into her life—after both the Moore family and the Watson family had abandoned her—she could have ended up just as defenseless, left to face the world alone with nowhere safe to turn.

That realization made Cathryn pick up her phone and send Damien a text: “Damien, do you have time tonight? There’s something I want to discuss.”

When evening came, Cathryn found herself sitting in the hospital garden, the sky painted in soft shades of gold as the sun slipped away. She let herself sink into the peace, her mind far from the chaos inside.

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Andrew eventually found her outside, but as he took in the quiet scene—the gentle light, and Cathryn lost in thought—he almost didn't want to interrupt.

“Damien, over here,” Cathryn called, reaching out her hand the instant she spotted him.

A warm smile spread across Andrew's face as he walked over, threading his fingers through hers and settling beside her. He drew her close, wrapped an arm around her, and asked, “So, Cathryn, what is it you wanted to discuss?”

Cathryn squeezed his hand, her voice trembling. “Did you hear what happened? A girl was raped here at the hospital not long ago.”

The question caught Andrew off guard. His smile faded as a flicker of alarm crossed his eyes. “Who told you about that? It’s just a rumor—nothing more.”

Cathryn’s hands were icy in his grasp. “Everyone in the general ward seems to be talking about it.”

A troubled look crossed Andrew’s face. He had already told the director to keep the story quiet. How had it still spiraled out of control?

Cathryn nestled closer, her cheek brushing the crisp fabric of Andrew’s shirt. “It is a blessing you are here,” she murmured, her eyes shining like someone who had just glimpsed sunlight after a storm.

Andrew’s shoulders were taut beneath her touch. If she ever learned the truth—that he had arranged her transfer from the VIP suite to the general ward, and that she was the girl the rumors were about—how would she look at him then?

She gripped his arm as if it were an anchor in rough water. “Without you shielding me, Jordyn and her mother would have hounded me until I had no breath left.”

Without him, she never would have been able to afford the quiet luxury of a VIP room.

The faintest ghost of a smile touched his lips. “As long as I stand beside you, no one dares to hurt you.”

“You sound awfully sure of yourself,” she teased, tilting her head to catch his eye.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 189:

His lips curved with quiet pride. “Why shouldn’t I? I rule Olekgan.”

She smirked, eyes glinting with mischief. “Oh? And what does that make your brother, then?”

A fleeting smile—layered with something unreadable—crossed his face. “He answers to me too.”

Cathryn laughed softly, shaking her head. “Don’t flatter yourself. Everyone knows your brother is the Brooks heir—the real crown of Olekgan.”

He fell silent, weighing when he should reveal his true identity to Cathryn. The deeper his feelings for her grew, the harder it became to confess that he was actually Andrew. Would she still choose him if she knew? Or would the danger tied to his name frighten her away?

Biting her lip, Cathryn idly toyed with her finger. “I’ve heard rumors, though. They say Andrew is disfigured—crippled, even. The Brooks family wouldn’t want someone like that to inherit, would they?”

His smile stayed calm, but his eyes burned. “And who told you he was ruined like that?”

“Everyone says so. He hides away and is never seen in public. Probably too ashamed of his face,” she answered with a shrug.

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With a sudden spark of playfulness, he tilted her chin upward. “And if he wasn’t ugly at all?”

She frowned, doubtful. “Then why conceal himself like a ghost?”

He tapped her cheek lightly. “Maybe he just prefers shadows. Maybe he’s waiting for the right woman to notice him—not his name.”

Cathryn shook her head in disbelief. “Even if he really were scarred, he’s still the Brooks heir—wealthy beyond measure, powerful beyond comparison. Women would line up for a lifetime just to be in his orbit. He could have anyone.”

His lashes lowered, his voice taking on a bitter edge. “He does have admirers. Too many. But they chase his fortune, not his heart.”

Her thoughts drifted, recalling women like Vanessa—eager to wear the title of Mrs. Brooks, blind to the man beneath it.

He brushed a stray lock from her forehead and pressed a tender kiss there. “That’s why I’m the luckier one compared to Andrew. I’ve found a wonderful wife.”

Cathryn chuckled, eyes sparkling with challenge. “Careful. You don’t measure up to your brother—not in status, not in name.”

He caught her hand and kissed her fingertips, a daring smile tugging at his lips. “If it’s a title you want, I’ll take the fight to him. I’ll win you everything he has—and more.”

Cathryn’s eyes flew wide, disbelief lacing her voice. “You mean to challenge Andrew for the heir’s seat?”

“Why not?” Damien lounged back, arms draped across the wicker chair with practiced arrogance. “I carry the Brooks name too.”

Ambition. She had never imagined it ran so deep in him.

Leaning closer, he let a sly smile tug at his lips. “Tell me—do you want it?”

Cathryn shoved his face aside with a sharp flick of her hand. “If I truly wanted it, seducing Andrew would be far easier than watching you gamble with the inheritance.”

His smirk faltered, replaced by a flash of sudden fury. “How dare you—”

She cut him off with a cold glance, her tone calm, almost detached. “We signed a one-year agreement. Over three months have already passed. That leaves us less than nine. Your rivalry with Andrew has nothing to do with me.”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 190:

The spark in his eyes dimmed, like a flame strangled by smoke. After everything they had endured, he had believed she might finally see him—not the contract, not the title, but him. Yet her words bound them back to that single sheet of paper.

She added, her voice softer, almost a murmur, “Don’t worry. So long as I am your wife, I will remain loyal. I will not betray you—”

Her reassurance broke mid-sentence. The cushion beside her sank empty, and she nearly stumbled from the sudden shift.

Andrew was already on his feet, his face carved from ice. “I have business. I am leaving.”

She blinked after his retreating figure, stunned. What had she said wrong? Had she miscounted? She ticked off the days on her fingers. It was indeed less than nine months. Was he worried she might cling past the deadline?

Down the corridor, Andrew stalked toward the hospital doors, each step measured by a temper that flared behind clenched jaws. Ungrateful woman.

Just then, his phone vibrated in his pocket—a message from Cathryn. His eyes lit up. Perhaps she regretted her earlier words already. Perhaps she wanted to take them back.

He unlocked the screen. Her message stared back with merciless clarity:

“Mr. Brooks, rest assured. I take my commitments seriously. When the year is up, I will leave without causing you trouble.”

His hand shook, knuckles whitening around the phone. Teeth clenched, he hissed, “Cathryn, you really do stick to your word.”

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The device went dark with a snap of his thumb.

“Mr. Brooks.” Gavin’s voice interrupted, steady as ever. “The tests are back. Everything is normal. You are cleared for discharge.”

Andrew gave a curt nod and headed out. “Good. I will return to the company first.”

“Understood,” Gavin replied.

Andrew paused mid-step, his voice low and sharp. “Did you arrange the funds freeze for Moore Trading with the bank manager?”

Gavin nodded. “It’s been frozen.”

Satisfaction flickered in Andrew’s eyes. Richard had been feeding on funds that belonged to Cathryn’s late mother. Andrew would never allow that parasite to keep draining her legacy.

“Moore Trading has lost its partner,” Gavin added, “and now, with no liquidity, Richard is unraveling.”

Andrew's lips curled into a cold half-smile. "Let him writhe. His true punishment has yet to begin."

Gavin continued, "Richard has been desperate. He has tried again and again to see you at Brooks Group."

A dark laugh broke from Andrew's throat, a glint of lethal intent flashing like steel in his gaze. "Does he really wish to see me?" Because if Andrew agreed to that meeting, it wouldn't end with handshakes—it would end with Richard's ruin.

Andrew stepped into the corridor without hesitation.

Gavin hurried after him. "Mr. Brooks, do you want me to drive you?"

Andrew shook his head. "Stay here and look after my wife."

That stopped Gavin in his tracks. It was obvious to him now—Andrew cared most about Cathryn's safety.

Outside, the evening air was cold as Cathryn quietly slipped back into her hospital room.

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Chapter 191:

Andrew had pulled every string to make sure Cathryn received the best care, and it wasn't long before she began to feel better.

Eventually, Cathryn grew restless in the VIP suite and decided to go out. She pressed the elevator button, planning to check the general ward.

The moment the elevator doors slid open, she was met by the ward's lively commotion. People hurried up and down the hallways, their conversations blending into a constant wash of noise. The general ward felt like a completely different universe compared to the hush of the VIP area.

As Cathryn walked by, a patient with a mean look on his face stared at her, smirking as he stroked his chin.

The sight made Cathryn shudder, especially as memories of the girl who had been violated in the general ward crept back into her mind. She was about to turn away when she overheard two patients gossiping nearby.

“Isn’t that the girl from that tragic day?”

“Are you sure? She actually came back?”

“That’s her, no doubt about it... She’s really stunning.”

“Someone so young... What a pity...”

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Cathryn glanced over her shoulder and caught people staring—faces filled with mixed emotions as they whispered and gestured in her direction.

A cold unease slid down her spine. She quickly stepped back into the elevator and returned to the VIP suite.

What were those people muttering about? Why did they call her “the girl from that tragic day”? She had never even set foot in the general ward before. Why were those strangers acting as if they knew her?

Trying to shake off the unease, Cathryn forced herself to brush the questions aside. When she returned to the VIP suite, she found Gavin waiting.

He greeted her, “Mrs. Brooks, how are you feeling now?”

Cathryn answered with a reassuring smile. “Much better, thanks. I think I’ll be discharged soon.”

“Let’s schedule another checkup for tomorrow,” Gavin said. “If everything looks good, you can recuperate at home.”

Before they could say anything more, raised voices echoed from the hall.

A middle-aged man was making a scene, his shouting growing more frantic. “I’m looking for my daughter! Who do you think you are, keeping me out? She almost died in this hospital! I’m taking you all to court!”

Cathryn recognized the voice and shuddered. There was no mistaking it. It was Richard.

A rush of footsteps thundered down the corridor, and Richard soon barged into the room, his face set in a deep scowl.

Cathryn instinctively pressed herself against the headboard. For a moment, she almost forgot she wasn't a helpless kid anymore—and Richard had no power over her now.

A nurse rushed in, slightly out of breath, and asked Cathryn, "Ms. Moore, this man says he's your father. Is that true?"

Cathryn replied flatly, "No, he's not." Richard had cut her off long ago; he'd made it clear they were no longer family.

Ignoring everyone, Richard marched straight up to Cathryn, jabbing a finger at her in accusation. "I knew I raised a thankless wretch. You're nothing like Jordyn."

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The nurse tried to intervene, tugging at Richard's sleeve. "Ms. Moore doesn't know you, sir. Please leave. This area is reserved for VIPs only."

Annoyed, Richard lashed out, striking the nurse hard enough to split her lip. "Shut up with your nonsense already!"

That was the last straw for Gavin. He stepped in and seized Richard's arm in a tight grip. "What's the matter with you? Have you lost your mind?"

The moment Richard recognized Gavin, his anger only flared. He pointed at both Gavin and Cathryn and snapped, "You two make a shameless couple!"

That did it. Cathryn shot to her feet, her voice sharp. "Watch your mouth, Richard Moore!"

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Richard glared at Gavin, then turned his rage back on Cathryn. “How could you stoop so low? Marrying a man twice your age at just twenty years old. You’ve disgraced the Moore family.”

Cathryn’s hands curled into fists. “The only disgrace here is you! Always siding with Jordyn and her mother, never once caring about the truth.”

Richard swung his fist threateningly in front of Cathryn’s face. “You want the truth? That butler you call a husband used the Brooks family name to freeze all of Moore Trading’s accounts at the bank!”

A subtle tremor ran through Cathryn’s lashes. Gavin wouldn’t have taken action against the Moores’ finances on his own; he must have been acting under Damien’s instructions. Damien was helping her.

“You could have stayed as Mrs. Watson,” Richard continued, his voice rising, “but instead you chose to marry some washed-up old man and drag the Moore family’s reputation through the mud!”

Cathryn’s hands shook with fury. “It was Jordyn who had an affair with Liam, ruining my marriage and forcing us apart.”

Richard shot her a look of pure disdain. “That’s your problem. Jordyn’s always outshone you, ever since you were kids.”

Richard’s sheer shamelessness left Cathryn momentarily speechless. “So stealing someone else’s husband is something to brag about?”

Richard’s eyes grew cold. “Zoe had it right. You turned out just like your mother—cheap and worthless.”

Cathryn went pale, her voice tight with emotion. “My mother gave up everything for you. She cut off her own family and even used her own money to help you start a business, and this is how you repay—”

Richard let out a nasty laugh, then scoffed. “So what? I’ve insulted her before. Hell, I even laid a hand on her.”

Rage welled up in Cathryn, her eyes burning, her whole body quivering. Richard had actually abused her mother. What could have made her mother choose a man like him?

Richard shot Gavin a look of contempt. “All you are is a glorified servant, acting like you’re someone important just because you work for the Brooks family.”

Gavin clasped his hands behind his back and spoke with cool indifference. “Did you ever consider that I’m only doing what Mr. Brooks instructed?”

Richard let out a mocking laugh and cast Gavin a smug look. “I have no personal vendetta against Mr. Brooks. He won’t drive the Moore family into a corner. Besides, I’ve already spoken with him, and I’ll find a chance to clear up any confusion in person. Just wait. He’ll have you out the door soon enough.”

“You actually spoke with Mr. Brooks?” Gavin asked, watching him closely.

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Chapter 193:

Richard tipped his head back, flashing a cunning grin. “What’s wrong? Afraid now? Mr. Brooks personally received me.”

A new scheme sparked in Richard’s mind. Gavin had been riding on Andrew’s reputation—using the Brooks family car and acting important in front of everyone. Why not hand both Gavin and Cathryn over to Andrew to win his favor?

People in power never tolerated betrayal. Richard was convinced Andrew would deal with Gavin and Cathryn harshly. And if Richard turned against his own family—his own daughter—surely Andrew would respect that. Perhaps it would even be enough to restart the collaboration with Moore Trading.

Gavin gave a cold smile. “And what did Mr. Brooks actually say to you?”

Still full of himself, Richard replied, “He treats me like an equal, despite our age gap. He even invited me to dinner.”

Gavin let out a short, derisive laugh. He couldn’t believe Richard’s shamelessness. Andrew had already said the day he met Richard would be Richard’s downfall.

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“You’re going to the bank tomorrow to unfreeze Moore Trading’s accounts,” Richard barked, jabbing a finger at Gavin, “or I’ll march straight to Mr. Brooks and expose how you’ve been using his name to indulge your wife!”

Gavin's eyes narrowed, his gaze fixed on Richard. "And what if I say no?"

Richard's expression turned cold. With a quick gesture, several tough-looking men stormed into the room.

Gavin stepped protectively in front of Cathryn, placing himself between her and the danger. "So you're really going to use brute force now?"

Richard's lips curled into a nasty smile as he snarled, "Since you won't unfreeze the accounts, I'll just have my men drag you to the bank myself!"

Gavin pulled out his phone to call for backup, but one of Richard's men snatched it from his hand before he could dial.

Gavin shot Cathryn a look. "Call Mr. Brooks."

Without hesitating, Cathryn hurried to dial Damien's number.

"Don't panic, Mrs. Brooks. Mr. Brooks arranged for security here at the hospital," Gavin said, trying to steady her.

But Cathryn glanced up, worry in her eyes. “I can’t get through. The call won’t connect.”

A shadow of concern crossed Gavin’s face. He knew Andrew’s security was stationed at the entrance, but none of them were close by on this floor.

“Take them down!” Richard barked.

The men surged forward, and the room erupted into a fight.

Despite the odds, Gavin—who had served in the military—moved with brutal efficiency. He dropped two attackers and pinned them to the floor in seconds.

Richard, seething, glared at his men. “Seriously? There are six of you and you still can’t handle one old man? Don’t even bother coming back to work for the Moore family!”

Spurred on by Richard’s threat, the men attacked with even more aggression.

Even with all his training, Gavin couldn’t hold them off forever. Outnumbered—and older—he was eventually overwhelmed.

“Gavin!” Cathryn cried, rushing forward in panic to help.

Two of the men seized Cathryn by both arms, holding her back.

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Richard announced with satisfaction, “I’ll have you both tied up.” He was convinced that turning them in would win him Andrew’s appreciation.

The men didn’t let up. They kept hitting Gavin until he curled on the floor, blood dribbling from his mouth and streaking through his gray hair.

Desperate, Cathryn shouted, “Stop! He’s not my husband, and hurting him won’t do you any good.”

Richard sneered. “Oh, really? If he isn’t your husband, why does he keep risking himself for you? Or are you claiming Andrew is your husband now, since Gavin works for him?”

Cathryn couldn’t find an answer. She remembered asking Gavin once: if he was the Brooks family butler, why did he serve Damien instead of Andrew? Gavin had explained that Andrew was away most of the time and rarely came home, while Damien had been raised by Amanda and was respected by everyone—so Gavin naturally followed him.

Details like that were kept strictly within the Brooks family, and no outsiders ever knew.

Noticing Cathryn’s hesitation, Richard gave her a mocking smile. “You may dream of marrying Andrew all you want, but do you really think fate is ever going to let that happen?”

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Cathryn lifted her chin. “What is it you’re after today, Richard?”

Richard stepped closer, his tone cold. “The answer’s easy. I want your husband to use Mr. Brooks’s name to unfreeze Moore Trading’s accounts at the bank.”

Cathryn fixed him with a steely look. “That money belongs to my mother, not you. I won’t let you take any of it.”

Without warning, Richard’s hand whipped through the air, striking Cathryn across the face. “You’re just as much of a disgrace as your mother ever was.”

The force of the slap left Cathryn dazed, her cheek throbbing, her vision swimming.

Richard grabbed a fistful of her hair, his eyes blazing with hatred. “Are you going to do it or not?”

Cathryn glared up at him, unwavering. “No. I won’t.”

Richard yanked her by the hair and threw her onto the bed. “If you refuse, I’ll hand you and your husband over to Mr. Brooks. You won’t fare well in his hands.”

Pushing herself up, Cathryn looked Richard straight in the eye. “Then hand us over to Mr. Brooks.”

She sounded almost eager.

Richard saw through her, his eyes narrowing as a smirk tugged at his mouth. “So that’s your game? You want to get close to Mr. Brooks so you can try to seduce him?”

Cathryn met his gaze with nothing but contempt. “Do you really think everyone’s as shameless as Jordyn?”

Richard twisted Cathryn’s hair tighter, his eyes bloodshot with rage. “You vile woman! How dare you tarnish Jordyn’s name?”

Tears stung Cathryn’s eyes as she fought against his grip. “What do you even gain from humiliating your own daughter?”

Richard threw his head back and let out a cruel laugh. “Humiliate you? I’m just stating the obvious: you were violated by a pack of filthy men.”

Cathryn’s body stiffened, her voice breaking as she stammered, “What... what did you just say?”

Richard’s words came out like venom. “Your clothes were torn away, and five men violated you right there, in front of everyone.”

Her face drained of all color, her lips trembling as the memory of those stares and whispers from the general ward flooded back. In a sickening rush, everything made sense. She was the girl they had been whispering about.

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Chapter 195:

Cathryn's knees gave out, and she sank onto the bed like a lifeless doll. Margaret's earlier words returned—those men were vicious predators, and it was them who had hurt her. The things Margaret had whispered now echoed like a curse in her mind. How could any woman survive something so cruel? How was she supposed to keep living after this?

Hot tears welled and streamed down her cheeks, one after another.

A single thought stabbed at her—did Damien know? He probably didn't. If he did, he would despise her, turn away from her, and never want to see her again.

Damien had once flown into a jealous rage over nothing more than her offhand lie about sharing a bed with Liam. He had claimed her past meant nothing, but what man could truly accept a woman so defiled?

Richard pressed his boot harder against Gavin's skull and sneered, "An old fool and a filthy slut passed around by men—you really are a perfect match."

Through the haze of blood and pain, Gavin forced his eyes open, struggling to speak. "Mrs. Brooks, don't believe him... It isn't true..." But his voice was so broken and faint that it never reached Cathryn's ears.

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Richard's phone buzzed, and the screen lit up with Jordyn's name.

"Dad, did you handle it?" her voice asked sharply through the line.

Grinding his teeth, Richard spat on Gavin and growled, "They won't yield. They won't go near the bank."

“Then beat them and be done with it,” Jordyn said coolly.

“No,” Richard retorted. “If I hand them over to Andrew myself, he’ll have to see me.”

“Andrew’s secretary already took Liam’s card,” Jordyn said smoothly. “It won’t be long before he gets an appointment.”

Richard’s eyes gleamed. “So Liam actually has that kind of influence?”

“You think I’d choose a useless man?” Jordyn replied sharply.

Casting a look of pure disdain at Cathryn, Richard muttered, “Maybe I should take your advice. Cathryn is desperate to meet Andrew. If she dares throw herself at him, it could ruin everything.”

Jordyn chuckled. “Her? After being tossed aside by Liam and violated by those filthy men? Andrew wouldn’t waste a second on her.”

Richard grunted in agreement. “You’re right, but I’d rather not take any chances.”

“There’s nothing to worry about,” Jordyn assured him. “Liam and I will visit Andrew ourselves. Just wait for good news.”

Relief flickered across Richard's face, and he motioned for his men to stand down. Turning back to the bed, his expression hardened as he glared at Cathryn's frail figure. "You filthy slut. Don't ever call yourself my daughter again. I refuse to let you drag the Moore name through the dirt."

Cathryn's lashes trembled as her eyes fell shut, tears searing paths down her face. A slut. Her own father had damned her with that word. Not even in her darkest dreams had she imagined he would call her that so viciously.

The moment Richard stormed out, Andrew's guards finally came pounding up the stairs.

The nurses—paralyzed by fear until then—scrambled to follow Andrew's standing orders and summon backup at last.

When the guards burst into the room, the scene was harrowing. Gavin lay in a pool of his own blood, his mouth moving but no sound coming out, while Cathryn sprawled across the bed—one side of her face grotesquely swollen, the rest of her complexion ghostly pale.

The guards fumbled to call Andrew, only to find his phone still powered off. With no other option, they rushed Gavin toward emergency care and called in a team of doctors and nurses to tend to Cathryn.

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Gavin's injuries were severe. Multiple ribs were fractured, and he was sent straight into surgery.

Cathryn, though visibly shattered, had no critical wounds beyond the bruising.

Moments later, Margaret hurried back from her errand and froze when she learned what had happened in her absence. Tears spilling freely, she gathered Cathryn into her arms. "Mrs. Brooks... what on earth happened here? Talk to me."

Cathryn's body quaked as she folded into herself. Then, suddenly, she clutched Margaret's hand with startling force. "Get me a computer. Right now."

Margaret didn't hesitate. She dashed out and returned with a laptop borrowed from the nurses' station.

The moment it was set in front of Cathryn, her hands flew over the keyboard. She hacked into the hospital's surveillance system with practiced speed. But the screens came up blank—every recording from the general ward corridor was gone. Someone had deliberately wiped the footage.

A cold weight settled in her stomach. There was no way the hospital would erase its surveillance unless something so awful had happened that no one dared speak of it.

Even so, Cathryn's resolve hardened. With a few swift maneuvers, the deleted files flickered back to life on the screen.

The recovered footage showed Damien storming down the far corridor with his men. He kicked a door open with force. Ten minutes later, guards dragged out five men, their pants around their ankles—one of them completely naked.

Finally, Damien appeared again, carrying a girl cradled in his arms, her body concealed beneath his suit jacket. A nurse rushed in with a gurney, and Damien lowered the girl onto it with surprising gentleness.

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Cathryn zoomed in on the footage, her heart pounding as the image sharpened.

The face staring back at her was her own.

Margaret slapped a trembling hand over her mouth, her voice breaking. “No... it can’t be you...”

Cathryn’s whole body quaked, tears blurring her vision. How could this be real? Damien had always kept her under strict protection in the VIP suite. How had she ended up in that room, exposed to such horror?

Desperate for answers, Cathryn kept scrolling through the feeds until another scene appeared—Zoe at the nurses’ station, slipping money into the head nurse’s hand.

Cathryn’s vision burned with fury. Jordyn and Zoe. They were the ones who had orchestrated this.

Her thoughts snapped back to Damien. He had seen everything. He knew the nightmare she had endured. So why—why did he still hold her, still come to her side?

Could it be he didn’t care about the stain she now carried?

Just then, her phone lit up on the table.

“Cathryn, I’m on my way to the hospital.” Andrew’s voice came through the line, breathless and raw with panic. He’d heard she’d been attacked, and he was losing his mind with worry.

A while back, still fuming, Andrew had shut off his phone after that last argument with Cathryn. He arrived at the office in a foul mood, losing himself in Ethan’s long-winded update until the world outside blurred into nothing.

Only when the report finally wrapped up did Andrew bother to switch his phone back on.

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The screen lit up with missed calls and frantic messages. Instinct told him to call Gavin immediately, but a gruff voice answered instead—it was one of the bodyguards.

Andrew barely managed to choke out his question before the guard relayed the news. Richard had stormed into Cathryn's hospital room, leaving both Gavin and Cathryn battered.

Every muscle in Andrew's body went taut.

There was no time to wait for the chauffeur. He tore out of the parking lot behind the wheel, knuckles white on the steering wheel as he sped toward the hospital.

Guilt gnawed at him. Why had he left his phone off? Why had he left Cathryn unprotected?

The guard's words kept echoing—Richard had hit Cathryn, had dragged her by the hair. The image alone narrowed Andrew's eyes with rage. He hit redial, his voice sharp as a blade. "Do not let Richard Moore out of your sight. Keep him restrained."

Meanwhile, back in the hospital room, Cathryn jolted out of her daze. She darted into the bathroom and cranked the shower as hot as it would go, scalding water pouring over her.

She scrubbed at her arms and neck until her skin was raw, desperate to wash away everything she couldn't stop imagining. The roar of the water drowned her thoughts, but it couldn't drown the shame.

Margaret's anxious voice filtered in from the hallway. "Mrs. Brooks, please, open the door. You're starting to scare me."

Fear made Margaret's words tremble. She worried Cathryn might break beneath the weight of what had happened.

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Inside, Cathryn murmured, "Margaret, go home and bring me something."

Margaret's refusal was immediate. "I'll get it in the morning. Right now, I'm staying here with you."

Cathryn didn't budge. "Just leave. I need to be alone for a while."

Margaret pleaded, “I can’t leave you in this state. Let me stay.”

Leaning her forehead against the cold tile, Cathryn replied, “Relax. I won’t harm myself... not until I’ve had my revenge.”

After a long pause, Margaret finally relented. “I’ll tell the guards to stay outside, and I’ll have a few nurses check in. Call them if you need anything.”

Cathryn’s voice came from behind the door. “Alright.”

Once Margaret’s footsteps faded down the hall, Cathryn crumbled. She slid down to the icy floor, sobs wracking her until she was left limp and hollow.

Eventually, she dragged herself back to the bed and collapsed into the tangled sheets.

Andrew burst into the room not long after, thunder in his eyes. He found Cathryn lying there, pale and trembling, barely holding herself together.

“Cathryn, I’m right here.” He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close.

She jolted at his touch, shivers rippling through her entire body.

He searched her face for answers—and froze when he saw the bruises on her cheek. “Who did this to you?”

A dark look overtook him, his voice flat with fury. “Richard is never going to get away with this.”

The doctor quietly explained that Cathryn had refused treatment and pushed everyone away, not allowing anyone to lay a hand on her. Determined to help, Andrew picked up an ice pack and reached for her carefully.

But Cathryn recoiled, crying out as she shoved him away. “Don’t touch me!”

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Chapter 198:

Caught off guard, he nearly stumbled, his hands still hovering in the air. He stared at her—huddled at the edge of the bed, wide-eyed and terrified.

Why was she like this?

The guards had only mentioned Richard hitting Gavin. They hadn't said anything about Richard hitting Cathryn. She had endured far worse at her father's hands—beatings, lashes—and never once reacted like this.

His voice softened. "Alright. I won't touch you. I'll just stay by your side. I promise, nobody will hurt you again."

Through tears, Cathryn finally lifted her head, her words barely more than a whisper. "Damien, let's end our marriage."

The request landed like a stone, knocking the air from his lungs. Nine months. That was all that remained of their contract—yet she couldn't even bear to wait that long.

His question barely broke the silence, his voice hoarse, his hands shaking around the slick ice pack. "Why, Cathryn?"

She couldn't hold it back. Tears ran freely, each one burning.

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Because she had been defiled by five men. Because she felt filthy and worthless. Because the mirror had become her enemy—every time she looked at herself, shame stared back. There was no way Damien could accept what she couldn't even face in herself.

Damien, bound by his own sense of duty, would never ask for a divorce, so she had to set them both free.

But how could she say the real reason? The truth was a weight she couldn't share—a pain too deep to voice. Maybe if she never spoke it, if she never said it aloud, it would simply vanish, and she could erase it from her memory.

Lowering her head, she hugged her arms tight, tears sliding down her cheeks. Through gritted teeth, she blurted, "Liam wants us to start over. I think it's time I gave him another chance."

A storm rose in the dark depths of Andrew's eyes. He'd once dismissed Liam's talk of reconciliation as nothing more than wishful thinking. But now Cathryn herself was saying it—saying she wanted Liam again.

“Say that again,” Andrew bit out, staring at her with a darkness that could swallow her whole.

Head bowed, lashes wet with tears, the world blurring before her eyes, Cathryn forced the words out again. “I want to marry Liam again.”

Ice cracked in Andrew’s fist, shards spilling between his fingers. A sharp edge cut through his voice. “Did Richard slap the sense out of you?”

Cathryn dug her nails into her own skin until pain sparked up her arms. “I’ve thought it through. Why should I hand my husband over to Jordyn? Since Liam still has feelings for me, I’ll take him back. Let her taste what it’s like to be betrayed.”

Coldness swept into Andrew’s stare. She had just called Liam her husband. The word stung.

His reply was colder than ice. “If Liam is your husband now, then what am I to you?”

Empty, bitter laughter slipped from Cathryn’s lips. “I rushed into marrying you. Now I’ve come to my senses. Don’t people always say you’re better off sticking with your first spouse?”

Andrew grabbed Cathryn’s chin, tilting her face up with an iron grip. “You really dare sit there and say Liam is the one you were meant to be with?”

Even as her head was forced up, Cathryn kept her gaze fixed on the sheets, refusing to meet his eyes.

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Chapter 199:

His jaw tightened, each word clipped and cold. “I’ve never even had a wife before you. You’re the one with a divorce in your past. You don’t get to look down on me.”

Cathryn bit down hard, swallowing the pain burning in her chest. She couldn’t let herself falter now. She didn’t look down on him—she felt she was marked by disgrace, unworthy of him.

More than that, she believed she had dragged him down. He had nearly lost his life because of her. He'd been pulled headlong into her mess with the Moores and the Watsons. He was just an illegitimate son; he didn't have the strength to fight both families for her sake.

With a trembling hand, Cathryn pushed him away and yanked the blanket up over her shoulders. "I'm exhausted. Please just leave."

Andrew stood motionless, watching the fragile outline curled beneath the covers, a thousand thoughts flickering in his eyes. No other woman had ever meant this much to him. He wanted more than a marriage bound by a one-year agreement—he wanted a life with her at his side forever, even in death.

Now she was pushing him toward the door and talking about marrying another man.

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His teeth clenched. He fixed his gaze on the back of her head beneath the covers. "We made a deal—one year. I don't care what you say. Not a day less. Not a second less."

Cathryn bit the edge of the blanket, swallowing down the sobs threatening to break free. Leaving him was the last thing she wanted. But she was stained now. No man would ever accept a woman violated by monsters—men whose hands were soaked in every kind of filth.

The thought made her wish she could disappear for good. But her revenge was unfinished. Her mother's justice still tethered her to this world.

"If you bring up getting back with Liam again, I'll lock you away," Andrew said through gritted teeth.

The door slammed shut behind him.

Silence settled over the room.

Cathryn curled into a tighter ball beneath the blanket, and at last, she let herself fall apart. Sobs spilled out, shaking her whole frame.

Since Damien had woken up, hope had crept in—timid and delicate. Maybe, just maybe, there was a chance for them to last, a chance to build something real together.

But happiness never seemed to stay long in her life. Every time she reached for it, fate found a way to snatch it away. Jordyn. Zoe. Richard. Liam. She would never forget, and she would never forgive. They would all pay for what they had done.

Her thoughts leapt to Andrew, the head of Brooks Group. A restless urge to meet him bubbled up inside her, stronger than ever. Questions spun through her mind. What had

made Richard back off so quickly? Why had he vanished instead of dragging her and Gavin to confront Andrew?

Nothing could deter her now. If it meant sacrificing her own safety, so be it—she was determined to find Andrew, to join forces with him, and to bring the Moores and the Watsons crashing down. There was no time left to hesitate. If she wanted any hope of justice, she had to act first. Andrew was the key, and she was done waiting.

Meanwhile, out in the corridor, Andrew was already making his next move. He dialed Ethan without missing a beat. “Spread word to the press—Watson Tech cooked their financials. Let everyone know.”

With Watson Tech teetering on the edge of its IPO, one headline would be enough to ruin them. If Watson Tech failed now, a comeback would be nearly impossible.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 200:

Andrew had no patience for the Watson family's incompetence. This time, Cathryn would see the truth—her former husband was all show and no strength, useless when confronted with real adversity.

Ethan responded firmly, "I'll handle it right away."

At that moment, Margaret rushed out of the elevator, arms overflowing with packages. She spotted Andrew standing like a statue outside the VIP suite and stopped dead in her tracks. Then, tears streaming, she broke down completely.

"Mr. Brooks, you have to stand up for your wife," she cried, barely able to catch her breath. "What she's been put through is worse than anything I can imagine!"

Andrew's brow furrowed in irritation. "She's not as delicate as you think. She'll survive a slap."

Margaret shook her head furiously, sobs making her words tremble. "How can you even say that? She's just a young woman. How is she supposed to move on after what happened to her?"

His expression hardened, his voice unyielding. “You’re underestimating her. She’s stronger than anyone gives her credit for.”

“She’s not just going to survive—she’s going to come back fighting.”

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He remembered the times Cathryn had endured Richard’s cruelty without breaking. And now, after just one slap, she was already making plans—already thinking about her future with Liam. She didn’t look like a woman ready to give up.

Packages tumbled from Margaret’s arms as she stomped her foot in defiance. “If you won’t punish those five bastards, I will. I’ll track down every last one of those men and make them pay for what they did to her.”

A muscle jumped in Andrew’s jaw, his voice turning low and sharp. “What did you just say?”

No one was supposed to know about the attempted assault. The whole thing had been kept secret. How had Margaret found out?

Margaret fixed him with a steady, tear-stained glare. “You know exactly what happened. Mrs. Brooks was assaulted by five men in the ward downstairs, and you’re the one who carried her out.”

Andrew's chest tightened painfully. He lowered his voice. "Who told you?"

Margaret glanced toward Cathryn's closed door. "She watched the surveillance footage herself."

Andrew's face went unreadable. The footage had been wiped—he'd ordered it erased so it couldn't be recovered. How on earth had she seen it?

Andrew called the hacker. "Is there any chance the hospital footage can be restored?"

The hacker shook his head, his tone blunt. "Impossible. The original files were wiped out. Nothing's left to recover."

A heavy silence settled over Andrew. That should have been the end of the story, yet against all odds, the missing footage had reappeared—and somehow made its way straight to Cathryn.

Then, after a moment's hesitation, the hacker added, "Unless..."

Andrew's stare turned frosty. "Unless what?"

The hacker's voice dropped, quiet and grave. "If Kestrel had a hand in this, then nothing is certain. What looks impossible to us is effortless for Kestrel. Kestrel can break through anything."

A flicker of understanding crossed Andrew's face. Kestrel had to be behind this.

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Message from Noa: Have a really really nice day dear readers. God loves you and Noa wishes you all the best. (—☺—O)

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