

ONCE THE FOOLISH WIFE, NOW HIS ETERNAL OBSESSION

Chapter 2:

The moment Cathryn saw the paper, she recognized her mother's handwriting.

The letter claimed Bettina Moore could no longer bear the pain and had chosen to end her own life. Then, in cold, flat language, it stated that Cathryn had willingly renounced any claim to her mother's assets. Cathryn's stomach turned. She refused to believe a single word.

Her mother had been confined to a psychiatric hospital for years, barely conscious most days. There was no way Bettina had suddenly written something like this. And when had Cathryn ever given up her inheritance?

The corners of Jordyn's lips twisted into something cruel. "Cathryn, doesn't it sting, having your whole world stripped away?"

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Fury surged through Cathryn as she met Jordyn's gaze. In that moment, everything snapped into place. Her mother had been relatively lucid just days ago, when Cathryn last visited—and now Bettina had supposedly taken her own life.

No fucking way.

This reeked of a scheme. Jordyn and Liam.

Bettina had been born into privilege, carrying a fortune into her marriage with Richard Moore—Cathryn's father. That money had dragged Richard out of poverty and transformed him into the polished, respected Mr. Moore everyone admired.

Now, as Cathryn pieced it together, the truth sharpened into something unbearable: Richard had slept with Zoe White and fathered Jordyn, yet he had never divorced Bettina. He'd stayed married just long enough to keep himself positioned to inherit Bettina's fortune. Their marriage hadn't been a love story at all. It had been a calculated grab for power and money.

A sharp burn stung behind Cathryn's eyes. The Moore and Watson families had drained her mother dry, taken everything they could, and then discarded both Bettina and Cathryn like trash.

What had her mother suffered at the very end? What had they done to her as she drew her last breath?

Cathryn's fists curled so tightly her nails bit into her palms. Rage clawed through her, sharp and ruthless, leaving nothing untouched.

She would have her vengeance.

She would drag the truth into the light and make the people responsible answer for what they'd done. And she would not let a single cent of her mother's money end up in the hands of those leeches.

The Moore and Watson families would pay for every plot they'd crafted and carried out.

And she would make sure they bled for it.

Jordyn leaned in close, her voice low and smug. “Cathryn, you might think you’re clever, but so what? To Liam, you’re just a dumb bitch with nothing to offer—especially without a diploma. With my degree from a prestigious school, I’m the only one qualified to be his wife.”

Watson Tech had been limping along for years, its projects stalled by a technical wall no one could break through. If they solved it, the company could finally go public—and the Watson family’s status would skyrocket.

The missing piece was a mythical figure in the tech world. Years ago, Kestrel had dropped a single piece of code that sent shockwaves across the industry. Whoever brought Kestrel in would become a kingmaker overnight—maybe even outshine the Brooks family’s empire.

Jordyn’s smirk deepened, her chin lifting as she stepped back and raised her voice. “I was lucky enough to attend one of Kestrel’s lectures while I was studying abroad. He practically treated me like a protégé. If anyone can reach him, it’s me.”

“Really?” Liam arched a brow, genuine surprise flickering in his tone. Industry titans had poured fortunes into tracking down Kestrel, all for nothing—and Jordyn was claiming she actually knew him?

Jordyn gave him a sweet nod and curled herself into his embrace. Kestrel had been elevated to legend, unreachable to almost everyone. She didn’t know him at all, but if a bluff could secure her place as Liam’s wife, she would bluff to the end. She doubted it would ever blow up in her face.

Nearby, Cathryn let out a sharp, derisive laugh.

Liam's head snapped toward her, disgust written plainly across his face. "You barely have an education. Of course you can't comprehend Kestrel's influence. Anyway, we're divorcing tomorrow. Your belongings will be tossed out. You're not setting foot back in the Watson estate."

With Jordyn clinging smugly to his arm, Liam walked away without a glance back.

Cathryn's eyes followed their retreating figures, cold and steady, brimming with quiet fury. It was true she hadn't spent much time in school—she'd been scouted young for a secretive program designed to shape extraordinary minds. Coding had always been her weapon.

She pulled out her phone, a dangerous calm settling over her. On the screen glowed a string of code she had spent three relentless years perfecting.

The figure the entire tech industry had hunted for—the legendary Kestrel—was Cathryn herself, hidden in plain sight within the Watson family since her marriage.

Countless sleepless nights had gone into Cathryn's work debugging Watson Tech's systems. Just last night, she had completed the final half of the code. She had intended to give it to Liam—yet after everything that had happened today, the thought was laughable.

Her grip on the phone tightened until her knuckles turned pale. That code could either launch Watson Tech into the stratosphere... or drag both the Watson and Moore families into disaster.

Elsewhere, outside one of the hospital's VIP rooms, the attending physician gave Andrew a detailed report on Jorge Brooks's condition. "The nurses overreacted. Finger movement is a common reflex in a vegetative state. Your father remains unconscious."

Karl lowered his head, chastened. "This was my mistake, Mr. Brooks. I thought your father had woken up and reported it without double-checking."

Andrew shook his head, his expression carved from ice. "No. Someone deliberately spread word that my father was waking up to stall my succession at Brooks Group."

Karl looked up, his voice dropping. "Then it must be Cara..."

Cara Brooks—Andrew's calculating stepmother—had been laying traps for years, waiting for the right moment to seize control of the conglomerate. Andrew nodded, his jaw tightening, his eyes glinting cold. "She's getting impatient."

A crease formed between Karl's brows. "No wonder your grandmother keeps arranging suitable women in your life. If she doesn't act first, Cara will. And she'll use women of questionable origins and hidden agendas, no less."

A shadow crossed Andrew's face. Time was slipping away. He had to secure a wife—fast. Marriage was the quickest move that could keep Cara from trying to plant one of her own people into his life again.

An image flashed through his mind—the woman from last night.

“Find someone for me,” Andrew ordered, his tone sharp.

Karl blinked, puzzled. “Who?”

“That woman from last night,” Andrew said, his voice leaving no room for argument.

Earlier, as the funeral home staff carried Bettina’s body out, Cathryn had drifted down the corridor, dazed and stripped of purpose. By the time she finally came back to herself, she found she was standing outside a VIP hospital room.

She noticed a tall man in a charcoal suit standing nearby, one hand tucked into his pocket. The sterile hallway lights sharpened his profile as he issued crisp orders to his subordinate.

Cathryn instinctively turned to leave—until the subordinate’s voice carried across the corridor. “Understood, Mr. Brooks.”

Cathryn stopped mid-stride, her body going rigid.

A member of the Brooks family?

Andrew lifted his head, his gaze meeting Cathryn’s from across the distance. His eyes were steady and unreadable, holding her in place.

Kestrel dipped his head toward Andrew. “I’ll send men to search for her right away.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Andrew said quietly, decisively—his attention never leaving Cathryn.