

Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 271:

Mortified, Cathryn swatted at her. “You’re impossible!”

Sophie refused to back down. She leaned closer and whispered, “Tell me—what did it actually look like?”

Cathryn’s face tightened into a glare. “Just don’t ask.”

Sophie clicked her tongue in mock annoyance. “Come on. At least satisfy my curiosity. I went out of my way to make you coffee, didn’t I?”

Cathryn hesitated, her cheeks blazing. “Honestly? It was... a little overwhelming.”

Sophie covered her mouth, eyes wide with disbelief. “You mean... that overwhelming?”

With an awkward little gesture, Cathryn tried to indicate the size.

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Sophie's jaw dropped. "Well, whoever marries Mr. Brooks is about to have the best nights of her life."

That didn't spark any jealousy in Cathryn. Nights with Damien were already sweet and fulfilling. Yet she realized she'd never actually looked at his manhood during intimacy—always too shy, always turning her face away.

Inside his sleek, sunlit office, Andrew called Ethan over. "Get me the full list of administrative staff," he ordered.

Ethan darted to the door, waving at his assistant to bring the folder at once.

With barely a glance, Andrew flipped through the pages, searching for Cathryn's name. He didn't find it. A shadow passed over his features as he looked up. "Tell me, Ethan, which department is my wife working in right now?"

Caught completely off guard, Ethan stammered, "Y-your wife... She joined Brooks Group?"

Then, like a puzzle snapping into place, realization struck. He remembered the résumé Andrew had forwarded earlier that week. The applicant had been Cathryn.

The blood drained from Ethan's face. "I-I'll double-check that right away..." Overwhelmed by recent work, he'd handed the assignment off to Victor and never followed up.

"Now that I think about it, I saw Mrs. Brooks downstairs this morning. I figured she was here for some discreet audit, not actually working," Ethan admitted, his nerves fraying.

Andrew's stare could have frozen stone. His tone was flat—dangerous. "My wife is cleaning the restrooms here. That's where she's been assigned."

The news hit Ethan hard. "That can't be right..."

Fumbling with his phone, he scrolled through the latest HR placement updates, and there it was in black and white. Cathryn Brooks was listed as part of the Janitorial Department team.

Ethan shuffled through the paperwork, his brow furrowed. "What is Victor thinking? I already gave him a heads-up—so why would he place Mrs. Brooks in—"

He broke off mid-sentence, his eyes snagging on Cathryn's résumé. He swallowed hard, his voice suddenly uncertain. "Mr. Brooks... given Mrs. Brooks's credentials, perhaps the cleaning staff would be a more suitable fit."

Andrew lifted his gaze, cool and razor-sharp.

Ethan's Adam's apple bobbed. He forced a dry cough, scrambling for words. "Of course, she might also do fine at reception. That position doesn't require... well, any particular education."

"Are you suggesting my wife is uneducated?" Andrew's words landed like ice.

Ethan's hand flew to his cheek and he gave himself a nervous slap. "Forgive me—I misspoke."

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Andrew leaned back, his tone clipped. “Is there a department with light duties and decent pay?”

“Brooks Group doesn’t operate that way,” Ethan replied after a pause. Everyone knew the company was Antaford’s crown jewel—where high salaries came at the cost of sleepless nights and relentless competition.

“From this day forward,” Andrew said, his voice brooking no argument, “no one at Brooks Group is permitted to work overtime.”

Ethan froze. Just because Cathryn was working at the company, one decree had upended its iron reputation. After a beat, he ventured, “The administration office has the least strain. They coordinate meetings, handle contracts, and ensure logistics. It’s steady work.”

Andrew recalled the timid young woman who had brought him files to sign yesterday. “Wasn’t it the administration staff who came to me for signatures yesterday?”

“Yes,” Ethan replied.

“Transfer Cathryn there,” Andrew ordered flatly.

“Understood.”

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“Go and fetch the company surveillance footage,” Andrew said. He wanted to see how Cathryn had been managing at the company these past few days.

When the screen flickered to life, Andrew’s breath caught.

Cathryn was clad in cleaning overalls, her delicate figure bent beneath the weight of a water bucket. She scrubbed floors until her back curved, while the head of cleaning barked orders at her over every minor slip.

Andrew’s chest tightened. His heart clenched with every stroke of her mop. The woman he had vowed to protect had been reduced to cleaning toilets for his employees.

Before his fury could consume him, his phone rang. He answered.

“Andrew, I’m back,” came a bright, familiar voice.

It was Nick.

Andrew's gaze shifted from the screen. "Graduated?"

Nick chuckled warmly. "Not yet. A month left, but I couldn't wait another day to see you."

A faint smile ghosted Andrew's lips. "Dinner tonight, then. My treat."

"Perfect! Although..." Nick sighed. "My mother insists I attend some socialite's birthday. Wants me to 'socialize and make connections,' but I don't care about those money-obsessed rich folks. The only person I want to see is you."

Andrew let out a low chuckle. "You do realize I'm one of those 'money-obsessed rich folks,' don't you?"

"You?" Nick teased. "No. You don't smell like money. You smell good."

Andrew arched a brow. "You're getting ridiculous."

Nick's laughter faded, his voice turning tentative. "Last time, you said you had someone in your heart. Was that true?"

“Yes.” Andrew’s lips curved faintly at the thought of Cathryn.

The line went quiet. Then Nick’s voice returned, wounded. “So now that you’re married, does that mean you’ll stop caring about me?”

Andrew frowned. “That’s not the same. And why are you jealous of your sister-in-law?”

Nick fell into a sulky silence, stung by a reality he hadn’t anticipated.

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Just then, Ethan knocked and stepped into Andrew's office, unease written all over his face. "Mr. Brooks, the entire cleaning department has been lent out by Liam. They've been sent to prepare for Mrs. Watson's birthday celebration."

Andrew's smile vanished. He asked Nick evenly, "Whose birthday party are you attending tonight?"

Nick's reply was casual. "The daughter of my mom's friend. She's hosting some huge bash. My mom called her friend Mrs. Moore."

Andrew's eyes narrowed. Jordyn's birthday. So Cathryn had been assigned to prepare for Jordyn's party.

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Nick kept talking, oblivious. "Apparently, every member of high society in Olekgan will be there. It's supposed to be the event of the season."

Andrew's gaze hardened, a storm gathering behind it. A trap. Jordyn and Liam had planned this to humiliate Cathryn. His voice dropped, controlled but seething. "Nick, I can't join you for dinner tonight."

Nick's protest was immediate. "What? Why not? Where are you going?"

"It's not about where I'm going. It's about where you need to be."

"Me?" Nick blinked.

"You're going to that birthday party."

Nick balked. "I don't want to! I want to have dinner with you!"

Andrew's tone sharpened. "Are you rebelling against me now? Ignoring what I tell you?"

The reprimand silenced Nick. After a beat, he muttered, sulky, "Fine. But why should I go?"

"Because your sister-in-law will be there."

A while later, at the Brooks residence, Cara lounged on the velvet sofa, her voice tight with irritation. "Jordyn's party tonight is crawling with Antaford's elite—the gentlemen,

the socialites, everyone who matters. Since Nick has returned from abroad, he'll inevitably need to engage with the influential families. Tonight is the perfect opportunity for him to network, yet he refused to go."

Grace Morton, the family's longtime servant, chuckled softly. "He's still young and doesn't understand the weight of these occasions. You might need to guide him more."

Cara rubbed her temples, weariness etched across her face. "If only Nick had a fraction of Andrew's shrewdness, my life would be far easier."

"Mom," a voice broke in.

Nick emerged from his room, chin lifted with quiet defiance. "I'll go with you to that birthday party tonight."

Cara's eyes kindled with delight as she looked at Nick. "So you've come around after all?" she purred.

Nick dropped onto the sofa, grabbed an apple, and let silence do the talking.

Cara slipped an arm around his shoulders, warm and practiced. "That's the right thing to do. Always listen to your mother. Everything I do is for your own good."

Nick turned the apple between thumb and forefinger, his expression as flat as a calm sea. The blaze of earlier defiance about the birthday banquet had gone out. He wasn't obeying his mother—he was merely following Andrew's orders.

Cara smoothed Nick's hair with the tenderness of a woman polishing an heirloom. "I'll get changed and prepare a gift for Ms. Moore."

When she disappeared into the bedroom, Nick glanced toward Grace, who was dusting a nearby console. "Did you know my brother has a wife?" he asked, his voice casual as a tossed pebble.

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Grace paused, the broom hovering midair. “I’ve heard your mother mention it,” she said.

“What’s her name?” He made the question sound like idle curiosity.

Grace frowned, drawing a blank, like someone searching for a name tucked away in the back of a drawer. “I think she’s Mrs. Moore’s daughter. The name escapes me.”

For a beat, the world tightened around Nick. No wonder Andrew had pushed him toward that banquet. So the Moore girl was the one who had stolen Andrew’s heart.

A bitter twist tightened his chest. He wanted to see her for himself—to find out whether she was the kind of beauty capable of stealing a heart.

His thumb drifted over his phone, landing on his gaming app out of habit. The legendary player known as Kestrel hadn’t logged on in months. He’d bombarded her with messages, begging her to mentor him; the only reply had been a single, icy line: “I do not take on amateurs.”

Nick sighed. If only Andrew’s wife were Kestrel, he would have the tutor he craved.

Cara reappeared in an evening gown that hugged her like a second skin. A strand of pink diamonds lay in her hand, catching the lamplight like tiny, insolent stars.

Grace found her voice. “That’s an extravagant gift, Mrs. Brooks.”

Cara gave a short, contemptuous snort that cut through the room. “Of course Jordyn isn’t worthy of something this valuable. But tonight is Nick’s public debut. I intend to make a statement. The necklace will be presented under his name.”

Grace inclined her head, understanding the performance. A gift ostensibly for the Moore daughter was really a banner: see what the Brooks family could place at their young man’s feet.

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“Call Zoe. Tell her Nick will be attending tonight.” Cara’s voice held a command that expected immediate obedience.

On the other end of that call, Zoe’s excitement spilled over. Nick’s public debut—at her daughter’s birthday banquet—sent her pulse racing.

Zoe rang Jordyn at once. “Nick Brooks will be there tonight. Pull out all the stops. Invite anyone who matters.”

Zoe didn’t have time to savor the victory before her phone buzzed again. Vince’s name lit the screen. She pressed her lips into a thin line. “I gave you money days ago. What else do you want?” Her tone was pure frost.

“It’s my daughter’s birthday,” Vince said. “I will celebrate with her.”

“You will not.” Zoe’s words landed like a blade.

“Richard is still in the hospital. What do you have to fear?” Vince snapped.

“You tried to kill Cathryn the other night. If you show your face, you expose us all.” Her voice hardened.

Vince laughed, a sound steeped in bitterness. “Heh. Are you afraid of exposure, or do you scorn me for being a gambler and a convict—too embarrassing to be your daughter’s father?”

“Either way, you’re not attending Jordyn’s party. Period.” She ended the call.

But Vince had been cooped up in his dingy apartment for far too long. News of the Moores’ grand celebration had already spread across the city, and the temptation to slip in among so many guests was a pull he couldn’t resist.

Inside the Moore estate, Jordyn stood before a full-length mirror while maids eased a mermaid gown over her skin.

Vanessa lingered close, her lacquered smile firmly in place. “Having Cathryn serve as a maid at your birthday banquet—now that’s the perfect revenge.”

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Jordyn laughed, short and controlled. “Do you think I made the party this grand just to sneer at her?”

“Then why else?” Vanessa pressed, curiosity peeking through her smirk.

Jordyn's smile slipped into something colder as she produced a folded piece of paper—a paternity report handled with surgical calm. “I had her toothbrush tested against my hair.”

Vanessa's eyes darted to the final line: Probability of kinship less than 0.01 percent. She blinked. “What does that mean?”

“It means I am truly my father's daughter,” Jordyn said, twirling a curl with practiced ease, “and Cathryn is not. She is no Moore by blood.”

Vanessa's mouth fell open in disbelief. “You're saying Cathryn isn't your father's real child?”

Jordyn's smile sharpened, a blade disguised as jewelry. “She's just a bastard.”

Vanessa covered her mouth, scandalized delight flaring. “All those years the other debutantes whispered behind your back, calling you a bastard—turns out the real bastard is Cathryn.”

“Exactly.” Jordyn's voice slid like silk over steel. “And tonight, the Moore estate is open to all for my birthday. That man who had an affair with Bettina is bound to show up.”

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Vanessa's eyes widened. "You're going to expose Cathryn's parentage in public?"

A cruel light danced in Jordyn's gaze. "I'll unmask Cathryn as the daughter of a murderer in front of the entire city. Imagine the stunned silence—and the way they'll look at her. Tell me that won't be satisfying."

Vanessa's grin spread. "Satisfying? More than satisfying. After tonight, she'll never stand in the same light again."

Sweeping back the curtain, Vanessa looked toward the entrance. The janitorial crew from Brooks Group streamed through the gates in a neat line.

Vanessa spotted Cathryn immediately, dressed head to toe in company-issued cleaning gear. She let out a low, mocking laugh. "Look at that. Cathryn fits those work clothes like she was born for them."

Jordyn turned toward the window, her eyes tracking Cathryn as she stepped inside, a mop in one hand and a bucket in the other.

Jordyn's gaze drifted back to the mirror, landing on the shimmering mermaid gown hugging her figure and the sparkling tiara resting perfectly on her head. A quiet wave of satisfaction stirred in her chest. A decade of rivalry had come to this. She stood at the center of it all, crowned the true daughter of the Moore family, while Cathryn was stuck scrubbing floors—an anonymous face among the help.

At the entrance of the Moore mansion, Cathryn froze mid-step, nearly letting her mop clatter to the pavement. So this was the grand estate Aleena had talked up the entire way here?

Realization dawned—sharp and unwelcome. She had been sent to clean her own childhood home.

Then another memory surfaced. Today was Jordyn’s birthday.

“Cathryn, stop staring and get moving. If you delay Ms. Moore’s party, it’ll be your neck on the line!” Aleena snapped, her glare unrelenting. Only the youngest staff had been chosen for this job; Bessie was nowhere to be seen.

Surrounded by strangers, Cathryn followed the others into the kitchen, shrinking into the flurry of orders and activity.

Later, once the guests arrived and the hall buzzed with conversation, Aleena singled Cathryn out—being the youngest—to pour wine and clear tables.

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Moving between the kitchen and the opulent dining room, Cathryn balanced her tray, weaving through laughter and clinking glasses.

Several guests eyed her with vague curiosity, because something about her face rang a distant bell, but none dared say it aloud. They wouldn't look too closely at a mere servant.

Then, abruptly, a hush swept through the room.

The doorman's voice rang out. "Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. and Mrs. Brooks have arrived!"

Every glass on Cathryn's tray rattled. Her hands trembled. Mr. Brooks? Was Andrew here?

She set the tray down and pressed forward, threading her way through the crush of glittering guests.

A shrill voice sliced through the noise. “Watch it! You’d better not touch my dress with those filthy hands!” A woman in white recoiled in disgust.

Cathryn recognized her at once—one of Jordyn’s loyal followers.

The woman did a double take. “Wait... Kathryn? Is that really you?”

Heads turned.

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“Isn’t Kathryn the oldest daughter in the Moore family? What’s she doing here dressed like a maid?”

“I heard she cheated on her husband, worked her mother to death, and her own father kicked her out. Even her husband’s family threw her out.”

“Some people get what they deserve. Karma always finds a way.”

Judgment thickened the air, eyes narrowing with open disdain.

Ignoring the jabs, Cathryn kept scanning the crowd, searching for Andrew.

Her hope evaporated the moment the room parted and the guests stepped aside.

It wasn't Andrew standing beside Cara.

Instead, a teenage boy had taken his place. There was still a youthful softness in his features, even with his hair slicked back—an obvious attempt to look older. His hand rested on Cara's arm, and together they stood in quiet sync, a flawless portrait of mother and son moving as one.

The light in Cathryn's eyes dimmed. No sign of Andrew. That must be Nick—Cara's own child.

With a heavy sigh, Cathryn turned away and began making her way back toward the kitchen.

Nick's debut sent ripples through the crowd. After all, it was the first time he had appeared at a public event.

The mothers of eligible daughters nearly vibrated with excitement. For years, rumors claimed Andrew was scarred and crippled, killing any dreams of a fairytale marriage into the Brooks family. Yet now there stood another Brooks man. Nick had already turned eighteen, an age where talks of marriage were no longer out of place. And who would have imagined that at only eighteen, he could already look so tall—and remarkably handsome?

A dozen young women stole glances his way, hearts fluttering with hope.

Nick paid no attention to the whispers swirling around him. Instead, he strode straight toward Jordyn, his eyes lingering as he sized her up with quiet scrutiny. Was this really the woman Andrew had married?

Jordyn wilted under his gaze, her cheeks flushing a brilliant red. She hadn't expected Nick to grace her party with his presence, much less to make his debut in social settings. What an honor—and he even seemed interested in her.

Jordyn basked in it, savoring the envy in the air. Too bad Nick was barely grown, and she was already spoken for.

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Still, what woman didn't crave the thrill of being admired?

With a demure tilt of her head, Jordyn let a playful smile tug at her lips. She twirled a strand of hair and subtly pressed her arms together, drawing every eye to her décolletage.

Nick's brows knit, his expression unimpressed. Beyond her appearance, the overt showiness—the way she draped herself in attention—made his stomach turn. There was nothing subtle or sophisticated about her. He couldn't help wondering what Andrew had ever seen in her.

With perfect timing, Cara lifted her hand, and Grace stepped forward with a velvet-wrapped gift box.

"Nick has a present for the birthday girl," Cara announced, her voice clear and bright.

Grace opened the box to reveal a necklace crafted from pink diamonds, each stone blazing beneath the lights.

“Nick picked it out himself,” Cara added smoothly. “He felt it matched Ms. Moore’s spirit perfectly.”

Zoe’s and Jordyn’s eyes widened in tandem, their faces lighting up with a rush of excitement. They never imagined Nick would value Jordyn like this. Zoe sneaked a glance at Jordyn, whose delight was nearly impossible to hide. If Nick were a few years older, she might have even believed he’d fallen for Jordyn on the spot.

The ladies crowded closer, admiration and envy battling across every face.

“Jordyn’s luck never runs out. Nick actually gave her a necklace like that!”

“Don’t let his age fool you. He’s got real presence. Maybe more than Andrew ever did.”

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“I wouldn’t be surprised if the Brooks family ends up with him at the helm one day.”

Every compliment made Cara's smile stretch wider. This was exactly the impression she wanted—her son standing tall, no longer in Andrew's shadow, ready to stand toe-to-toe with him.

Nick's face darkened, a storm brewing behind his eyes as the chatter around him drifted toward mocking Andrew. Andrew was more than family—he was the one person Nick would never allow anyone to disparage.

Frustration coiled in his chest. Nick leaned toward Cara, his tone clipped. "I need to get out of here for a minute."

Still laughing with the cluster of women, Cara barely spared him a glance. "Don't stay gone too long. Dinner's about to start."

Nick stepped away from the circle and headed for the bar, grateful for the relative quiet. He picked up a glass of champagne, the crystal clinking softly, and rested an elbow against the counter.

His gaze stayed locked on Jordyn, his brow tightening with every passing second. Something about her unsettled him—the way she moved, the tilt of her chin, the careful smiles. Everything felt rehearsed and hollow, like she was performing for an invisible audience.

He swirled the glass slowly, bubbles catching the light, and let out a silent sigh. So this was the woman Andrew had married? Her looks were plain enough, but her presence felt cheap. Why had Andrew chosen her? What had he possibly seen in her?

He drew a long breath and lifted the glass toward his mouth.

A playful voice spoke right beside his ear. “Not even legal yet, and you’re already drinking?”

Nick twisted around, startled. A pretty girl stood there, grinning as she plucked the glass from his hand.

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He narrowed his eyes at her, then retorted with a smirk, “Bold words from someone who still looks like she’s sneaking out past curfew. Are you even legal to drink?”

Cathryn blinked, then raised two fingers. “I’m twenty-two.”

He gave a dismissive snort. “Just a few years on me.”

She snapped her rag playfully. “Arm up.”

He obliged, lifting his arm off the bar so she could swipe the counter clean.

“So, do you work for the Moores?” he asked, keeping his tone light.

“Foot up,” she ordered, nudging him as she cleaned beneath it. “What, are you one of those people who look down on staff?”

“Not a chance,” Nick said, shaking his head slowly. “Frankly, you’re leagues better than Ms. Moore.” He tipped his chin toward Jordyn, who was busy charming the guests.

Cathryn let out a quiet laugh. “Strange—if you think so little of her, why hand her a diamond necklace worth a small fortune?” She’d heard the staff whispering about it earlier.

Nick grumbled under his breath, “That was only because of my foolish brother...”

For the first time, bitterness toward Andrew flared in his chest. Love had a way of clouding judgment. Clearly, Andrew hadn’t escaped it.

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Restless, Nick pulled out his phone and started up a game.

The sharp in-game sounds caught Cathryn’s attention, and she leaned over with a raised brow. What a hopeless scrub.

“Damn it—low HP again,” Nick groaned, raking a hand through his hair in frustration.

Cathryn couldn’t take it anymore. She snatched the phone from his grip, her fingers flying in a blur as she unleashed a ruthless chain of ultimate moves, wiping out the entire wave of enemies in seconds.

Nick froze, watching his health bar surge back to full. His eyes went wide. “That combo...” he breathed, stunned. It was the same devastating finisher he’d only ever seen Kestrel pull off.

Cathryn flicked a glance at his gamer tag, her mouth curving into a smug little smile. “The Uncrowned King,” she said, her voice laced with dry amusement.

Nick’s hand trembled as he pointed at her. “You... you’re Kestrel?”

One brow lifted, her expression coldly amused. Well, wasn’t that a twist of fate. Just a month ago, this very “Uncrowned King” had flooded her inbox with invitations, begging for duo queues and calling her “mentor” like some overeager stray dog.

She’d cleared every level in a single night, lost interest, and walked away from the game. Running into him in real life? That, she hadn’t seen coming.

Nick shot upright, nearly knocking his stool over. “You’re Kestrel?”

Cathryn’s lashes lifted slowly, a lazy smirk tugging at her lips. “So you’re that little scrub everyone keeps talking about.”

Without warning, Nick barreled forward and wrapped her in a bear hug. “Mentor!”

Cathryn planted a hand on his chest and shoved him back. “Who said I agreed to coach you?”

“I’ll do anything you tell me!” Nick blurted, desperation coloring his voice.

Cathryn studied him for a long moment, then gave a single nod. “All right.”

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His face lit up as if someone had flipped a switch. “You mean it?”

Cathryn inclined her head, her voice dropping. “Just keep it quiet that I’m Kestrel.”

Nick nodded so fast his hair nearly fell into his eyes. “Understood.”

Then recognition hit him like a truck. His eyes went huge. “Hold on—are you Kestrel, the one all those tech giants have been throwing money at to find?”

Cathryn simply raised a finger to her lips, a faint smirk ghosting across her face. “Quiet.”

Nick practically vibrated with excitement. “You are Kestrel!” he blurted, nearly bouncing off his seat.

Nick’s mind raced. Andrew had been chasing Kestrel’s shadow for three years. If Andrew found out Nick had just met her, he would lose his mind from sheer excitement.

Cathryn leaned in slightly, curiosity sparking in her eyes. “You and your brother close?”

Nick puffed up proudly. “Absolutely. We had plans to grab dinner tonight, but Mom hauled me over here.”

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“Then introduce me to him,” Cathryn said a little too quickly.

Nick’s grin widened, delighted. “Gladly.” After all, Andrew had been searching for her—it felt like destiny had just done them a favor. A mischievous glint flashed in his eyes. “Looking for a boyfriend? I could set you up.”

Cathryn blinked, startled. He’d barely exchanged a handful of words with her and he was already trying to play matchmaker? “Thanks, but I’m not shopping for a boyfriend,” she said evenly. She was a married woman—husband and all. A boyfriend would be redundant.

Nick leaned forward, undeterred. “What about my brother, though?”

Her brows arched. “Andrew?”

Nick nodded eagerly, hope glinting in his eyes.

Cathryn only sighed, her lips quirked. “He’s already engaged. You seriously didn’t know?”

Nick's gaze flicked toward Jordyn, disdain twisting his mouth. "Her? Please. I'd pay to see you steal him right out from under her."

Cathryn let out a startled laugh. "Wreck someone's engagement? Your brother would probably pound you into the floor if he heard you say that."

Nick's sneer deepened. "Then he's blind as a bat for choosing her."

Cathryn cocked her head, curiosity sparking. "Who exactly did he put a ring on?"

Nick jabbed a finger toward Jordyn, where she was doubled over with laughter, her shoulders shaking. "Her."

Cathryn followed Nick's gaze and spotted Vanessa standing smugly at Jordyn's side. A crease formed between her brows. Hadn't Ethan insisted Vanessa wasn't Andrew's girlfriend?

"Are you certain it's her?" Kathryn asked quietly.

Nick gave a curt nod. "Just another snob. You didn't take a liking to her, did you?"

“Hardly. She isn’t worthy of your brother,” Cathryn replied with calm disdain. She had yet to meet Andrew face-to-face, but the glimpse she’d once caught through the screen at the auction house had left its mark. Even half-hidden, his silhouette carried a natural magnetism. Before his disfigurement, he must have been dazzling—a man who drew eyes without trying.

Far away, in his office, Andrew absently toyed with the clasp of his cufflink. A sudden sneeze escaped him, snapping him out of his thoughts.

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A knock sounded, and Ethan stepped in, grinning. “No need to worry, Mr. Brooks. Nick and your wife are getting along like a house on fire.” He held out his phone, playing a video.

On the screen, Nick laughed animatedly beside Cathryn, who was dressed in a cleaner's uniform.

Andrew's gaze sharpened. He dialed Nick without hesitation. "Have you met your sister-in-law?"

Nick glanced at Jordyn before replying, "Yes."

Cathryn, overhearing, shot him a meaningful look. Nick lifted a hand in a subtle okay, muffled the phone, and whispered, "Andrew, I know who Kestrel is."

On the other end, Andrew's eyes flicked to Jordyn in the video. His voice carried a cool weight. "So do I."

Nick blinked, surprised. "When did you find out?"

"Two days ago."

Nick spoke into the phone again. "Kestrel wants to meet you."

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Andrew leaned back in his chair, his voice flat. “There’s no need. I don’t wish to see her.”

What was Jordyn up to? She’d visited him with Liam not long ago, and now she was angling for another meeting. Until the code test results came back, Andrew wouldn’t grant her the chance. She was far too sly and manipulative.

Nick exhaled, disappointed. He’d thought the revelation would shake Andrew, but Andrew already knew.

“Your sister-in-law still doesn’t know who I truly am,” Andrew added. “Don’t let it slip.”

Before Nick could stew in it, Andrew had already hung up.

Ethan returned and placed a sealed report on Andrew’s desk. “Jordyn took a strand of hair for a kinship test with your wife.”

Andrew flipped through the pages, his gaze stopping on the final line.

“They’re not related,” Ethan said quietly. “No blood ties at all.”

Andrew's expression hardened. If Jordyn was Richard's biological daughter, and Cathryn had no blood relation to Jordyn...

"Mrs. Brooks isn't Richard's biological daughter," Ethan concluded.

Andrew's brows drew together. If Cathryn wasn't Richard's biological daughter, did that mean Bettina had been unfaithful? Who was Cathryn's real father?

Andrew's gaze sharpened like steel. "So that's why Jordyn wanted Cathryn at the Moore residence..."

Before Ethan could reply, Andrew's phone rang. Margaret's anxious voice spilled through the line. "Mr. Brooks, I can't hold this in any longer. It's haunted me for days. I have to tell you."

"Speak."

"A few days ago, Mrs. Brooks and I hailed a taxi. The driver—he almost assaulted her."

Margaret had lived in a state of unease ever since, every breath shadowed by the fear that something dreadful might happen to Cathryn. Confiding in Andrew finally loosened something in her chest. If anyone could protect Cathryn, it was him.

Andrew's gaze turned sharp as a blade. "What did he look like?"

Whoever dared target his woman had already signed their death warrant.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 281:

Margaret's voice trembled. "I was drugged as soon as I got inside. He wore a hat and a mask... He never spoke a word. I truly can't recall."

Andrew's jaw tightened. "Where did it happen?"

"In the east side ruins."

Ethan's brow furrowed, his voice heavy with concern. "That district is a wasteland. No cameras, no oversight. It'll be nearly impossible to trace."

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Andrew's fists curled until his knuckles whitened. "Then we assume the worst—that Zoe sent that driver. He will resurface. Hack into the Moore estate's..."

"...surveillance. Comb through every frame and investigate everyone who steps through their doors. I want Cathryn watched over without a single gap." He would rather raze a city to the ground than allow harm to brush against her.

Elsewhere, Nick lowered the phone in silence, his expression unreadable. He turned to Cathryn and delivered the blow. "Andrew said he doesn't want to see you."

Cathryn's heart stuttered, the air catching in her lungs. For a moment, disbelief burned hotter than the sting of rejection. Andrew refused to see her? Unthinkable. Brooks Group needed the code—logically, he would never refuse to meet her.

Then clarity struck like ice water. Jordyn must have impersonated her.

That day in the café, Jordyn had caught a glimpse of the code on Cathryn's phone. Later, Jordyn and Liam had appeared before Andrew, presenting themselves as allies and dangling a contract. Jordyn must have handed Andrew that code, claiming she was Kestrel.

Cathryn snatched up her phone. "Sophie, do you know the terms of the contract between our company and Watson Tech?"

Sophie, ever meticulous in administration, had seen every agreement that crossed her desk. "I skimmed it. It's a risk-sharing contract. If the code provided by Liam and Jordyn has issues, both Watson Tech and Moore Trading will forfeit their stakes to Brooks Group."

The knot in Cathryn's forehead loosened. So Andrew was no fool. He hadn't trusted Jordyn blindly with an investment—he'd bound her with a noose disguised as a contract. If the code failed, both Watson and Moore would collapse, swallowed whole by Brooks Group.

Nick's voice broke into Cathryn's thoughts, gentle but firm. "Don't worry. I'll visit my brother tomorrow, and you're coming with me."

Cathryn's lips curved into a faint smile as she shook her head. "No need. Not for now."

Cathryn let out a faint smile. This wasn't the moment to tell Andrew she was the real Kestrel. She would wait until he uncovered the cracks in that code himself. Once Jordyn's web of lies unraveled, the companies owned by both the Moore and Watson families would end up under Andrew's control.

Strange how fate had a way of turning the tables. Cathryn still hadn't stood face-to-face with Andrew, yet he had unwittingly become her unlikely ally.

Just then, a round of applause erupted from the stage, and the host announced, "Now, let's welcome the guest of the evening, Jordyn, daughter of the Moore family, and also wife of the CEO of the soon-to-IPO Watson Tech."

Nick's brow creased with confusion. Wife of Watson Tech's CEO? Wasn't Jordyn Andrew's wife?

He turned to Cathryn, who stood nearby with a mop. "How many daughters are in the Moore family?"

Cathryn kept her gaze fixed on Jordyn, who glittered beneath the lights. "There used to be two. Now only one's left."

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 282:

A deeper line formed between Nick's eyebrows. "So what happened to the other?"

With a sharp smack, Cathryn let the mop drop. "She's right in front of you, mopping the floor."

Nick's eyes widened. "Wait... you're a Moore too? So Zoe is your mother?"

Cathryn flipped her badge over so he could read her name. "The last name fits, but Zoe isn't my mother. She's just my father's second wife."

Nick lifted a hand to his mouth, stunned. "That means you're really..."

Cathryn was, in fact, his true sister-in-law.

Nick nearly let it slip—until Andrew’s warning rang loud and clear in his mind: “Your sister-in-law still doesn’t know who I really am, so don’t let it slip.”

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Now Nick understood why Cathryn had been by Andrew’s side yet kept searching for him so intently. She had no idea the man she’d married was Andrew himself.

Nick couldn’t help wondering what kind of game Andrew and Cathryn were playing. Even so, he felt a deep respect for both of them. Whatever game it was, he trusted they had their reasons.

All he had to do was keep silent.

Cathryn turned to Nick, her gaze steady. “And what exactly does that make me?”

Nick shrugged. “Nothing. Don’t worry about it.” Curiosity tugged at him anyway. Why was Andrew’s wife working this banquet as a janitor?

Onstage, Jordyn glided through her speech, beaming at the crowd.

Nick yawned, already bored. “I’m heading out for some air.”

Cathryn collected her mop and made her way back to the kitchen.

Just as she reached the doorway, Jordyn paused mid-sentence, her fingers pressing lightly to her throat.

“Could someone bring Mrs. Watson some water?” the host called out, gesturing for the servers.

Dozens of eyes landed on Kathryn in her janitorial uniform. Jordyn’s gaze met hers across the room, eyes burning with a silent challenge. The sore throat was deliberate.

With the world watching, Kathryn took a glass of water and walked toward the stage, each step slow and measured. It didn’t matter how she felt about Jordyn. Tonight, her job was to serve.

Cathryn climbed the steps and held the glass out.

Jordyn’s fingers slipped in a rehearsed fumble. The glass struck the floor and shattered with a piercing ring. A gasp left Jordyn’s lips, all fake shock. “Cathryn, why is it you?”

Murmurs rippled through the crowd as faces turned in surprise. So the server in the corner was the infamous eldest daughter of the Moore family. No one missed the cruelty of the spectacle—Jordyn dazzling under the lights while Cathryn played servant for Olekgan’s elite. It became instant gossip, spreading through the room like wildfire.

A derisive smirk flickered across Cathryn's face. Jordyn never changed her script, using the same trick again and again to humiliate her in public and feed her own vanity.

As Cathryn moved to step down, Jordyn clamped a hand around her arm and nodded toward the mess on the floor. “You’re on cleanup duty tonight, aren’t you?”

Cathryn's tone stayed flat. "I'll fetch a mop."

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 283:

Jordyn's eyes narrowed. "I can't stand something as filthy as a mop in my sight. Kneel and pick up every shard by hand."

The room held its breath, every eye riveted to the silent standoff between the two sisters.

Without a word, Cathryn knelt and began picking up the fragments.

A voice rose from the crowd, uneasy. "Mrs. Watson, she's still your sister. Isn't this a bit cruel?"

Jordyn sneered, flicking a cold glance at Cathryn. "Sister? Don't make me laugh. She's not even a Moore by blood. She's the result of Bettina's affair with another man."

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Cathryn's hands shook as a sharp sting flared—one shard had bitten into her palm. "Jordyn, what are you talking about?" How could her mother have had an affair?

Jordyn reached into her purse, pulled out a test report, and held it up for everyone to see. “Two paternity reports. The first proves I’m Richard’s daughter. The second? No blood tie between me and Cathryn.”

The facts were right there, plain as day.

A stunned buzz swept through the hall. Nobody had seen this coming. Cathryn wasn’t a Moore by blood?

Suddenly, Zoe’s voice thundered from across the room. “Jordyn, that’s enough! Get off the stage right now!”

Zoe had never imagined Jordyn would go against her warning and expose the forged paternity report for everyone to see.

The report that supposedly proved Jordyn and Richard’s kinship was actually between Jordyn and Vince. And before Zoe could get rid of it, Jordyn had already dragged it into the open, right in front of everyone.

Jordyn had no idea the one who’d had an affair wasn’t Bettina, but her own mother—and that the true illegitimate child wasn’t Cathryn at all...

Jordyn faced Zoe and spoke up, her voice clear. “Mom, all this time, it was Bettina who had the affair and bore a bastard, but we’re the ones who have carried the shame for two decades. Finally, everyone knows the truth, and we can wash this stain from our names.”

The women in the audience turned to Zoe with apologetic looks.

“I never realized we were wrong about you and Jordyn all this time.”

“You’ve suffered in silence for so long.”

“To live for twenty years being called names and accused of things you didn’t do—your tolerance is admirable.”

Zoe managed a wry smile. At this point, she had no choice but to pin everything on Bettina. After dabbing at her eyes as if wiping away tears, she addressed the audience, “I’m sorry you all had to witness this disgrace.”

She wanted the charade to end here. As long as Vince kept his distance, the truth would stay buried.

Meanwhile, Cathryn stood frozen beneath the stage lights, her mind racing. Could it really be true that she wasn’t Richard’s child? Had her mother actually cheated?

In the courtyard of the Moore residence, Vince slipped in without resistance.

With Richard laid up in the hospital, Zoe and Jordyn held the reins, and that made Vince bolder than ever. Zoe was his woman, and Jordyn was his daughter. Tonight, he owned the place.

All the while, Andrew's hacker tracked Vince's every move, watching him from the moment he entered. His face was quickly identified through data analysis.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 284:

The hacker forwarded Vince's file to Andrew: a gambler buried in debt to loan sharks, convicted of assault and battery—every vice imaginable stamped across his record.

Ethan stepped into Andrew's office, urgency in his voice. "Zoe and Vince were together for five years before she married Richard."

Andrew asked, "When did Zoe break up with Vince?"

Ethan shook his head. "Honestly, there was never a clean break between them."

Andrew's gaze sharpened. "So you're saying there's a chance Jordyn isn't Richard's biological daughter?"

Ethan's eyes flew wide. "But the paternity test said they were blood-related."

Andrew asked, "Are the samples still available? Run another paternity test."

"I'll get right on it," Ethan replied, already turning to hurry out.

Andrew added, "Since Vince did time, there should be a blood sample from him in the system. Have the lab compare it to Jordyn's."

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“I’ll handle it.” Ethan nodded quickly.

Meanwhile, Vince—already half drunk—started making demands. “Somebody bring me the finest wine in this place. I want nothing but the best tonight!”

Disgust flickered across the servants’ faces as they whispered among themselves. “Where did this beggar come from, acting like he’s in charge here?”

Wiping a hand beneath his nose, Vince wobbled and sneered at them. “You’d better remember me. Starting tonight, I run this house. Treat me right, and maybe I’ll go easy on you.”

The Moore family’s butler strode over, contempt written all over his face. “You need to leave right now, or I’ll have you tossed out myself.”

Stung by the butler’s words, Vince jabbed a finger at him. “You think you’re somebody? You’re just this family’s lapdog. Once the Moore fortune is mine, you’ll be the first to go!”

The butler’s patience snapped. “Security. Get him out of here.”

Several guards arrived without delay and hauled Vince to his feet.

Vince spat curses as they dragged him away. “I’m here for my daughter! Lay a hand on me and you’ll regret it for the rest of your miserable lives!”

Back in the ballroom, Jordyn’s eyes shone with triumph. Tonight marked her vindication. She was finally acknowledged as the rightful Moore daughter, while Cathryn carried the weight of being an illegitimate child.

Vanessa hurried onto the stage and leaned close to whisper in Jordyn’s ear.

A sly grin tugged at Jordyn’s lips. “That loser actually had the nerve to show up?”

Vanessa nodded, keeping her voice low. “It’s definitely him. He’s outside, drunk and making a scene. Security is trying to throw him out, but he keeps yelling that he wants to see his daughter.”

Jordyn’s excitement only grew. It felt like her problems were solving themselves tonight. She’d been racking her brain over how to deal with Vince, and now fate had delivered him straight into her hands.

Vanessa added with a smirk, “He’s also shouting that the Moore family fortune will be his, and that he’s the master of the house.”

Jordyn's eyes glittered with glee instead of anger. To her, Vince's arrival was proof enough that Cathryn was the result of Bettina's affair. He was here—loud, brash, and shameless—to claim what he believed was his.

A sly smile curved Jordyn's lips. "Let's do him a favor and give him a grand reunion with his daughter."

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 285:

Vanessa, barely able to contain her laughter, nodded. "I'll have security bring him in right now."

Moments later, four guards hauled Vince through the ballroom doors, his shouting echoing off the walls.

A ripple of disgust swept through the crowd as guests watched the disheveled drunk being dragged inside. Noses wrinkled. A few people traded horrified looks. No one at the banquet had ever seen someone so uncouth.

“Who thought it was a good idea to let someone like that in? This is outrageous,” one guest muttered under their breath.

Zoe’s heart skipped when she recognized Vince’s wine-soaked face. Panic flared in her eyes. What was he doing here?

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Feigning ignorance, Jordyn turned to the butler with a puzzled look. “Could you explain why this man is here?”

The butler stalled, searching for words he could say in polite company. Vince’s crude rants were too indecent to repeat in front of the well-heeled guests.

With her composure fraying, Zoe gave a curt order. “We have honored guests tonight. Get that drunk out of here immediately.”

Refusing to let the moment slip by, Jordyn called out sharply to the butler, “Please don’t hold back. Tell everyone what he said.”

Still burning from Vince’s insults, the butler finally let it out. “He’s been outside yelling that Mrs. Moore is his wife, that his daughter is among us, and that one day, the Moore fortune will belong to him.”

A storm of shocked voices erupted across the room. The entire audience plunged into chaos.

Some dismissed the drunken Vince’s ramblings as nonsense, but doubt began to settle over the crowd. Whispers spread. People started to believe that this shameless intruder must have been Bettina’s lover—and that he was probably Cathryn’s real father.

With every passing second, more judgmental eyes turned toward Cathryn, their stares sharp and cruel.

Jordyn seized the moment to twist the knife. She offered Cathryn a mocking smile. “There you have it, Cathryn. Your real father showed up just for you. He forced his way into the Moore house tonight because he couldn’t wait to see you.”

The words hit Cathryn like a slap, making her whole body go rigid with shock. She couldn't believe her mother would ever fall for someone so disgraceful. There was no way this man could be her father. Tears filled her eyes as she shook her head in protest. "That's not true. It can't be..."

But Zoe's fear outmatched even Cathryn's. It dawned on her that Jordyn had orchestrated the entire spectacle. In that moment, she realized her daughter was more of a liability than an ally. Everything had been fine when the charade stopped at the paternity test. But if this went any further, both she and Jordyn would be ruined.

"How could Bettina, someone of such high status, fall for a man so far beneath her?" a voice rang out.

Another guest sneered, "It makes sense now. No wonder her daughter works as a janitor. Trash breeds trash. Cleaning floors is the only job someone like her deserves."

The harsh, derisive chatter only grew louder, filling the banquet hall with disdain.

Cathryn's head swam, the room tilting beneath the brutal banquet lights.

Vince, sobered a little by the spectacle, locked eyes with Zoe and let a lecherous grin crawl across his lips. "Zoe, it's been a long time..."

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 286:

Without warning, the crack of Zoe's palm echoed through the hall as she struck Vince hard across the face. Her voice cut through the murmurs, ice-cold. "You're the one who betrayed Richard and fathered Cathryn!"

Trapped, Zoe could only keep up the charade.

Vince staggered, clutching his cheek in shock, his disbelieving gaze locked on Zoe.

Leaning in, Zoe hissed under her breath, "If you want to keep your daughter safe, you'll do exactly as I say."

Vince glanced at the faces staring him down, heard the guests whispering words like “Bettina’s affair,” “illegitimate,” and “Cathryn,” all laced with thinly veiled disgust.

Realizing what was happening, Vince bared his yellowed teeth and called out to Cathryn, “Come on over, sweetheart. Let your old man get a good look at you.”

Cathryn froze, her skin crawling as his gaze pinned her in place.

Recognition struck like a jolt. She remembered—this was the cab driver from that night, the man who had tried to assault her.

Tears spilled down Cathryn’s cheeks as she blurted, her voice trembling with terror, “That man isn’t my father. He can’t be. He just can’t!”

How could her real father ever attempt something so monstrous?

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Vanessa seized the moment to twist the knife further. “Cathryn, no wonder your mother died of heartbreak. You won’t even acknowledge your own father.”

The guests, already turning hostile, were quick to sneer.

“She still wants to deny it, even with the paternity test right in front of her.”

“We’ve all been fooled. Turns out Bettina is a slut.”

Harsh, poisonous words washed over Cathryn, dragging her under. Her vision swam, and her knees nearly gave out.

Just then, a tall figure stepped into the glare. Nick moved forward and caught her arm, steadying her. “Cathryn,” he said gently.

But Cathryn tore herself free, shrinking back. “Stay away from me. I don’t want you dragged into this mess.” The weight of gossip and rumor felt suffocating.

Nick turned, his glare locking onto Jordyn. “You and Cathryn have no blood relation. Could it be that you’re the illegitimate daughter here?”

Zoe froze, shock etched across her face. What was Nick doing? How had he gotten tangled up in this?

Jordyn's confident smirk faltered. "Mr. Brooks, this really isn't the time for jokes..."

Cara shot to her feet, her voice sharp with reproach. "Nick, this isn't your affair. Sit down before you make things worse."

Nick's eyes dropped to the fruit platter. Without hesitation, he picked up the knife and held it between Jordyn and Cathryn. "Vince, tonight one of these women is going to lose her looks. Who do you want it to be?"

Vince's drunken haze cleared in an instant. He had always hoped his daughter's beauty would open doors for him. "Don't you lay a hand on Jordyn!" he yelled.

"Vince!" Zoe exclaimed, her voice slicing through the tension. Nick's threat was a bluff, but it worked—Vince was shaken.

Nick's phone buzzed with a message from Andrew. He glanced down, scanned the paternity results, then lifted his eyes to Zoe. "The truth is out, Zoe. You're the one who cheated. Vince is your lover, and Jordyn is the daughter you and Vince had together."

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 287:

The room erupted. Shouts collided—confused, outraged. Who had Vince been involved with all along, Bettina or Zoe?

Nick snapped his fingers and pulled up a video for everyone to see—a clip from the identification agency showing Vince slyly swapping out Richard’s hair.

Onscreen, Vince flashed a crooked grin at the technician. “Just wait until I get my hands on the Moore fortune. You’ll be taken care of. Trust me.”

Now that the truth was exposed, Vince dropped the act. “That’s right. Jordyn’s my kid with Zoe. Richard spoiled Jordyn for two decades without ever knowing. I really struck gold, didn’t I?”

Jordyn stood rooted in place, eyes wide with disbelief. How could Vince be her real father? She turned to Zoe, terror creeping across her features.

Zoe had lost her composure the moment Vince was dragged in. Watching the incriminating video, she went deathly pale, all color draining from her face. Her reaction said everything.

Jordyn's knees gave out. She sank to the floor as whispers and judgment crashed over her from every side.

Richard had left the hospital, hoping to surprise Jordyn. Instead, he walked straight into chaos.

Spotting Richard at the door, Zoe stumbled back, fear squeezing her chest. Dread pooled in her eyes—she was certain Richard was going to destroy her.

Richard's voice thundered through the ballroom, his eyes blazing with fury. "Throw this lunatic out! Break his legs! And get him out of Olekgan for good!"

Vince's boldness crumbled. "I won't leave Olekgan. You can't do this to me—I'm Jordyn's real father! Nobody here would dare touch me..."

He knew what awaited him outside. The loan sharks were lurking, ready to snap his legs the moment he was thrown out. If he left Olekgan, it would be the end of him.

Panic seized Vince, turning him desperate. “Zoe, help me! Jordyn, I’m your father—don’t let them kill me!”

His pleas faded as the guards dragged him away, his voice growing fainter with every step.

All color drained from Zoe’s face. She knew she was next.

Suddenly, Richard’s hands reached for Zoe as he spoke gently. “You shouldn’t be sitting on the cold floor. Come on. Get up.”

Zoe stared at him, eyes wide with disbelief. Did this mean he was willing to forgive her unfaithfulness?

Without another word, Richard gathered Zoe and Jordyn into a protective embrace. “Zoe is my wife, and Jordyn will always be my daughter. That’s all that matters to me.”

The words cut into Cathryn like shattered glass. Tears spilled down her cheeks, sharp and sudden. Even after learning the truth—that Jordyn wasn’t his flesh and blood—Richard still chose to stand beside Jordyn and Zoe. Why?

Jordyn tossed Cathryn a smug, victorious look. It didn’t matter whether Cathryn shared Richard’s blood. His love would never reach her.

After Richard’s declaration, the crowd quickly changed its tune. No one dared criticize Zoe and Jordyn anymore. One by one, the guests began offering Jordyn birthday wishes.

Onstage, Cathryn stood in her janitor’s uniform, mop in hand. She watched the trio cling to one another, feeling small and invisible—like the punchline to someone else’s joke.

Then Nick took the microphone, his tone commanding. “I’m here today to meet a distinguished guest.”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 288:

A hush fell over the hall. Everyone knew that if Nick was in attendance, whoever he sought must hold real power.

Jordyn's eyes brightened, hope flickering across her face. "Any guest Mr. Brooks welcomes is an honored guest of the Moore family. Please, join us on stage."

Nick turned to Cathryn and extended his hand, his voice steady. "Cathryn, come here."

A ripple of surprise shot through the guests.

"Why is Nick calling her by name? How do they even know each other?"

Without hesitation, Nick slipped off his suit jacket and draped it over Cathryn's shoulders. "My brother wanted me to give you a message. When you're ready, it's time to come home."

The mention of “brother” sent a jolt through the entire hall. Everyone knew Nick had only one brother—Andrew. What connection did Cathryn have to Andrew?

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Zoe’s expression tightened, a thousand thoughts swirling behind her eyes. So Cathryn really was married to Andrew.

Richard bristled, quick to deflect. “Mr. Brooks, you don’t know her like we do. Cathryn’s an expert manipulator—don’t let her deceive you.”

Nick’s eyes narrowed with disdain. “Richard, maybe you should worry about your own house first. The Moore family has been on the edge of collapse for a while, hasn’t it? How much longer can you pretend nothing’s wrong?”

Richard’s confidence faltered, shaken by the public exposure. Zoe clutched Richard’s arm, trying to steady him. “We’re still a family. As long as we stick together, we’ll survive anything.”

She believed that even if the Moore fortune had taken a hit, their roots still ran deep. Besides, the Moore mansion alone could be leveraged for a massive loan if it ever came to that.

Nick’s gaze swept coolly over the three Moores huddled together.

“The birthday party’s over. It’s time for you to go.”

The words hit like ice water, leaving the trio dumbfounded.

Jordyn spoke first, her voice trembling. “Mr. Brooks, you can’t just say that. This is our house.”

A faint, unconcerned smile touched Nick’s lips. “It used to be. Now it belongs to someone else.”

Jordyn’s hands clenched into fists. “What are you talking about?”

Nick’s gaze shifted to Richard. “Ask your father. He knows exactly what happened.”

A flush crept up Richard’s neck, embarrassment and anger twisting together. He’d mortgaged the house a month ago, never imagining the deadline would come so quickly.

“I can pay it back. My son-in-law, Liam, just landed a contract with Brooks Group. The money will be here any day now,” Richard insisted.

Suddenly, chaos erupted at the entrance. Dozens of men in black stormed in, forcing the Moore staff out with brutal efficiency.

The courtyard plunged into confusion. Every one of them wore matching uniforms—Mafia enforcers, guns gleaming in their hands.

A wave of panic tore through the guests. They bolted for the exits, terrified by the sight of armed men.

Jordyn and Zoe broke down, voices quivering with fear. “What do we do? Someone help us—what are we supposed to do now?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 289:

The memory of the Mafia's whip still haunted Richard. His hands trembled as he whispered, "Grab whatever matters most, and let's get out of here before it's too late."

He knew better than to cross the Mafia again.

Jordyn, still dressed in her extravagant gown, and Zoe, weighed down by jewels, clutched their valuables and hurried after Richard, stumbling into the night.

With nowhere left to turn, their only option was to beg Liam for shelter.

Liam ended up cramming all three of them into a small rented apartment.

Richard stared at the cramped space, unable to hide his frustration. "Why didn't you just take us to the Watson house?"

Liam's face twisted with disdain. "Are you serious? The whole city knows you went up against the Mafia. I'd be out of my mind to bring you home. And if you forgot, my family never wanted me to marry Jordyn in the first place."

Jordyn bit her lip so hard she tasted blood, her head bowed. Since marrying Liam, she hadn't had a single peaceful day.

Richard swallowed his anger. He wasn't in a position to argue with Liam anymore.

"This is just a setback. Once Jordyn's code passes Andrew's inspection, Brooks Group will pour money into both Watson Tech and Moore Trading," Richard said, forcing hope into his voice.

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Liam finally softened a little. "Jordyn, you're sure your code is airtight, right?" After all, Watson Tech's shot at going public rested entirely on Jordyn's code.

Jordyn forced her voice steady. "Everything will be fine. The code's solid." Despite her words, anxiety gnawed at her.

Richard was convinced Brooks Group had signed a straightforward deal with Moore Trading and Watson Tech. What he didn't realize was that the contract was a gamble—if Jordyn's code failed inspection, Brooks Group would seize full control of both Watson Tech and Moore Trading.

But Jordyn clung to her confidence. She'd already paid a hacker to scan the code. No bugs, no loopholes—at least none she could see.

Liam nodded, satisfied for now. “Once Brooks Group sends the money, I’ll bring you all home.”

With that, Liam disappeared out the door, leaving the three of them in silence.

Richard stared at the closed door, bitterness seeping into his words. “That artful man is only around for the money.”

Jordyn bristled. “You’re the one who insisted I marry Liam.”

Richard’s scowl deepened. “If I’d known Liam would turn out to be such a disappointment after dumping Cathryn, I would’ve picked anyone for you but him.”

Jordyn’s patience snapped. “So you think I’m the disappointment now?”

Fury blazed in Richard’s eyes. He slapped Jordyn across the face. “Don’t raise your voice at me, you bastard!”

Zoe rushed forward to shield her daughter. “Richard, you’ve never hit Jordyn before—”

Richard rounded on Zoe and struck her too. “You betrayed me! Don’t think I’ll ever forgive you!”

Tears streamed down Jordyn’s face as she blurted, “You said you didn’t mind, and that I’m your only daughter...”

Richard grabbed a chair and swung it at Zoe and Jordyn. “What man can tolerate being cheated on and raising another man’s child? I only tried to salvage what little dignity I had left!”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 290:

So his magnanimity had been nothing but a facade.

Zoe dropped to her knees in front of Richard. “Vince won’t be coming back. From today on, you’ll be Jordyn’s only father, and she’ll never turn her back on you.”

Without hesitation, Jordyn knelt too. “I only acknowledge you as my father.”

Richard’s fury ebbed, his face twisting with pain as exhaustion sank into him. The wounds across his body ached more with every breath.

Zoe shot Jordyn a look.

Catching the silent cue, Jordyn said quickly, “Let me help with your bandages, Dad.”

Carefully, Jordyn cleaned Richard’s injuries and wrapped them with fresh gauze.

Later, after Richard finally drifted off to sleep, Jordyn turned to Zoe and whispered, “Why does he still accept me as his daughter after everything?” It made no sense.

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Zoe's eyes darkened, thoughtful. "There's only one explanation that fits."

Jordyn stared at her.

Gazing out the window into the night, Zoe spoke quietly. "Cathryn isn't really Richard's child, either."

Shock flickered across Jordyn's face, but she caught herself and let out a bitter laugh. "So it turns out none of us is actually related to Richard by blood. I guess if anyone's taking over the Moore fortune, it'll be a battle of wits, not bloodlines."

The news didn't soothe Zoe. Worry furrowed her brow as she rose to her feet. "I need to go out for a while."

Zoe knew the situation looked grim. Cathryn had latched onto Andrew, and the Moore family had crossed the Mafia. Enemies were closing in from every side—they needed a strong ally.

Zoe pulled out her phone and dialed Cara. "Mrs. Brooks, could we meet? There's something important we need to discuss."

Meanwhile, Cara sat fuming in her car. She'd watched helplessly as Nick disappeared down the street with Cathryn, her calls ignored, left behind like she meant nothing. She muttered curses under her breath, blaming Cathryn for everything—stealing Andrew, and now leading her son away.

Under normal circumstances, Cara wouldn't have bothered to take Zoe's call. She'd always considered the Moore family beneath her. But today, curiosity made her answer.

When Zoe slid into the passenger seat, Cara spoke at once, her voice sharp and direct. "Let's not play games. Why did you ask to meet me?"

The Moore family was in ruins—assets frozen, their home lost, bankruptcy looming. Cara had every reason to keep her distance.

Zoe kept her tone even. "I can help you seize control of Brooks Group."

Cara shot her a skeptical look, lips curling into a bitter smile. "You? And how exactly are you going to pull that off?"

Zoe didn't flinch. "Because I know who Kestrel is."

That got Cara's full attention. She straightened, her face tightening with interest. "Where is he?" She knew how desperately Andrew had been searching for Kestrel, whose code was the holy grail of the tech world.

Zoe answered without hesitation. “It’s Jordyn—my daughter.”

Cara laughed, shaking her head in disbelief. “Jordyn? You expect me to believe that?”

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Message from Noa: Have a great weekend lovely readers. God loves you and Noa wishes you all the best (—_—O)

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 291:

Zoe's voice didn't waver. "It's true. Jordyn wrote that code herself. Andrew already has it in his hands."

Cara's eyes narrowed, weighing every word. "If Andrew already has the code, why are you running to me now?" With that code in his pocket, taking him down as CEO would be even harder.

Zoe leaned in, her voice low and resolute. "Jordyn had no idea Andrew was married to Cathryn when they made their partnership. Now that we know, we're switching sides. We want to side with you, Mrs. Brooks."

Cara understood immediately. Jordyn and Liam had tried to ally with Andrew, thinking he would be the best weapon against Cathryn—never realizing Andrew and Cathryn were married.

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"Damien is Andrew, isn't he?" Zoe asked, her eyes locked on Cara.

Cara gave a single, cold nod. "That's right."

Zoe's hands curled into fists, her mind already racing ahead. Cathryn had landed in the lap of luxury, marrying Andrew—the wealthiest man in Olekgan.

Cara eyed Zoe with contempt. “Andrew already has the code. Jordyn's allegiance means nothing to me now.”

Zoe didn't flinch. “The code hasn't been integrated into the system yet. A few subtle changes, and it becomes worthless. No real harm to Brooks Group.”

That caught Cara's attention, her gaze sharpening as she weighed the possibilities. If the code could be sabotaged before deployment and throw Brooks Group into a major crisis, she could convene the board and force Andrew out.

Cara's lips curled into a sly grin. “We can't just break the code. Tell Jordyn to design a virus and slip it into the system. Once it's activated companywide, every bit of Brooks Group's data will be wiped out for good.”

Zoe stared at her, stunned. “That would cause massive losses for Brooks Group...”

Cara gave a cold laugh. “That's the point. We need significant losses to bring Andrew down.”

Zoe's mouth twisted into a faint, knowing smile. “I see what you're after.” To take on Andrew, they'd have to make sacrifices.

Cara continued, “Vanessa works with the tech team. I’ll have her cooperate with you.”

Zoe nodded. “You can count on me, Mrs. Brooks. Everything will go as you planned.”

The tension eased from Cara’s posture. “Once Brooks Group is under my control, you’ll be handsomely rewarded.”

A genuine smile appeared on Zoe’s face. “Thank you, Mrs. Brooks.”

Cara noticed Zoe still wasn’t leaving. “Is there something else?”

Zoe’s gaze dropped. “Today, your son publicly took Cathryn away. Aren’t you at least a little worried she’ll trick him, Mrs. Brooks? She married Andrew right after divorcing Liam.”

Cara felt a sharp pang of jealousy. She’d schemed for half a year to become Mrs. Brooks, while Cathryn had climbed into Andrew’s bed the night they met. Side by side, Cathryn’s approach looked far more effective than anyone else’s.

Cara clenched her fists. Now Cathryn was Nick’s sister-in-law, yet she still couldn’t stop trying to seduce him. To Cara, Nick was irreplaceable. She made sure everyone understood he was off-limits.

Cara gritted her teeth, her voice cold. “So what suggestion do you have?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 292:

Zoe answered, “Just drive Cathryn out of the Brooks family.”

Cara said, “Andrew registered his marriage to Cathryn under a fake name. She has no idea her husband is Andrew. They have a prenuptial agreement, and their marriage will only last a year. Cathryn’s days in the Brooks family are numbered.”

Zoe's eyes widened. "They actually signed a prenup?"

Cara smirked. "Did you honestly think Andrew would throw his life away on some pretty stranger and turn her into Mrs. Brooks? He's far too clever for that. As long as he has someone playing the role of a wife, he doesn't care who it is."

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A wave of relief washed over Zoe. She had been worried Andrew might have genuine feelings for Cathryn. That would have been a huge problem.

"Cathryn knows how to win people over. If she and Andrew start caring for each other during this year..." Zoe let her words trail off, her gaze settling on Cara.

Cara's frown deepened. Cathryn was young, pretty, and quick-witted. Andrew—still young himself—might not be immune to her charm. Cara sat quietly, turning a plan over in her mind. "You go ahead. I'll take care of getting them divorced."

Zoe managed a small smile. "I'll be waiting to hear your good news."

Zoe stepped out of the car in high spirits. She hadn't expected that Andrew and Cathryn's marriage was based on an agreement, not love. That made everything much simpler.

Meanwhile, Nick took Cathryn by the arm and led her out of the Moore house. She glanced back at the chaotic mansion and asked, “Who’s going to get the Moore residence in the end?”

Nick answered, “If the Moore family can’t pay up, the Mafia will take over the house. It’s in a prime spot. Someone wealthy will probably end up with it.”

Cathryn looked at him. “You have connections with the Mafia?”

Nick shook his head.

Cathryn let out a wry smile. “You’re barely an adult. There’s no way you know anyone from that world.” Even if Nick did, there was nothing she could do to negotiate with the Mafia.

A sudden buzz from his phone pulled his attention away. “Cathryn, I have to leave. My mom’s blowing up my phone,” he said, frowning at the screen. Cara was in a frenzy, searching for him everywhere.

Cathryn still had many questions for Nick, but he had already darted off. She wished she could use Nick as a way to get closer to Andrew. On top of that, she hadn’t even gotten Nick’s number.

Across town, Andrew sat at his desk, reviewing the DNA results comparing Cathryn and Richard.

Ethan stepped into the office. “Should we let Mrs. Brooks know?” The test proved Richard wasn’t Cathryn’s biological father.

Without a word, Andrew flipped the paper facedown on his desk. “Hold off for now. Quietly dig into Bettina’s history. We’ll handle everything once we track down Cathryn’s real father.” The situation was a tangled mess, and he didn’t want Cathryn to worry about it.

“Tomorrow, the Moore residence will be transferred to Cathryn,” Andrew said.

Ethan’s eyebrows shot up. “I thought the Mafia already took over the Moore residence?”

Andrew sidestepped the question. “Someone will reach out to you in the morning. Just cooperate with them for the transfer.”

Ethan nodded silently. He hesitated before asking, “Mr. Brooks, is this whole deal with Liam and Jordyn just so Mrs. Brooks ends up with both Watson Tech and Moore Trading?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 293:

Andrew replied, "Those belonged to Cathryn from the start."

A faint grin crossed Ethan's lips. "Mrs. Brooks thinks she's flat broke and is willing to scrub toilets just to survive, but she doesn't realize she already owns everything she could possibly want." Life with Andrew meant Cathryn lacked nothing.

Andrew's eyes glinted with amusement. "I'll give Cathryn anything she desires."

Glancing at his phone, Ethan announced, "Mrs. Brooks is home."

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Without hesitating, Andrew got to his feet. “Let’s head back.” Longing to see Cathryn again, he barely managed to hide his anticipation. Cathryn had been through a lot today, and he wanted to comfort her.

Arriving home with heavy steps, Cathryn dragged herself into the shower before collapsing onto the bed. Nothing in her past could compare to how drained she felt tonight. From scrubbing company restrooms, to cleaning up at the Moore residence all night, to being accused by Jordyn of not being Richard’s real daughter—everything had taken its toll. Life felt like a never-ending soap opera.

She never imagined her position at Brooks Group would come with so much chaos. Having Vanessa around only made things more complicated. She would have to stay sharp and watch Vanessa’s every move.

A soft click sounded as the bedroom door swung open.

Andrew crossed the room, concern written all over his face. “Margaret mentioned you skipped dinner.” He bent down and pressed a gentle kiss to her forehead.

Cathryn barely moved, letting out a sigh. “I just want to rest,” she whispered, stretching out across the bed. Exhaustion clung to her bones, and her heart felt heavier than ever.

Andrew settled beside her and began to rub her legs. “You seem upset tonight,” he said.

With her legs draped across his lap, she slowly opened her eyes. “Jordyn isn’t Richard’s real daughter,” she murmured.

Andrew’s hands paused as he squeezed her calf. “I’m aware,” he replied.

Cathryn met Andrew’s gaze. “Did you tell Nick?”

Andrew nodded. “The cab driver who tried to assault you last time—his name’s Vince.”

Her breath caught, and her skin went cold.

Andrew’s eyes never left her. “Cathryn, you shouldn’t keep things from me when you’re in trouble.”

If not for Margaret’s warning, he wouldn’t have been able to intervene in time. Tonight, Jordyn’s slander could have ruined Cathryn. By morning, the city could have been buzzing with baseless gossip about her—claiming she was the daughter of a murderer and a criminal.

Cathryn’s heart raced with fear. What she’d thought was an accident had been Zoe’s scheme from the start.

Sobs racked Cathryn's body as she wiped her face with trembling hands. "How did I deserve any of this? I have nothing left. And still, Zoe and Jordyn won't leave me alone. My own father, Richard..." She choked on the name. "He treats me like I'm invisible. He cares more about someone who isn't even his child than he does about me. Maybe there's just nothing about me worth loving."

The more she spoke, the heavier her sorrow became, until she could no longer control her tears.

Andrew drew her close, murmuring gentle words meant to soothe the ache in her heart. He longed to tell her the truth—that Richard didn't love her because they didn't share blood, and that Richard only valued Jordyn because she served a purpose right now.

But Andrew kept it to himself. People still whispered that Bettina had married Richard for love, and the truth about Cathryn's parentage would only drag Bettina's name through the mud. A scandal like that would leave deeper scars on Cathryn's soul.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 294:

In a tender voice, Andrew reassured her, “Cathryn, none of the three Moores deserve you. Let them go. Let me love you, because I do. I love you. As long as I love you, that’s enough...”

Tears clinging to her lashes, Cathryn searched his eyes, her voice trembling. “You really mean that? You love me?”

Without hesitation, Andrew answered, “With all my heart.”

Relief washed over her as she closed her eyes and rested against his chest, comforted by the steady beat of his heart. Whether they had a future or not, his words were enough to hold her together.

Gradually, Cathryn’s sobs faded, replaced by a quiet peace. Lying together with their bodies pressed close, the air between them thickened with a new kind of tension.

Cathryn shifted restlessly in his arms, her breath warm against his skin.

Andrew lowered his head and said softly, “If you keep moving like that, you’re going to wake the beast.”

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Cathryn looked up, her eyes wide and glistening like stars. “What if I want to see what happens next?”

Her hand drifted downward toward his lower body.

A look of surprise flashed across Andrew’s face. He hadn’t expected her to be so daring. Usually, Cathryn pulled away the moment things grew too intense. Anytime he tried to guide her hand to his penis, she would retreat and shake her head, her cheeks turning red. Tonight, though, something was different.

Cathryn moved with confidence now, letting her hand slip beneath the waistband of his underwear, making it clear she wasn’t going to stop.

With a trembling hand, Andrew caught her wrist. “Cathryn, do you really want this?” His voice barely rose above a whisper, rough with uncertainty.

If she kept going, things were bound to spiral out of control.

For a second, Cathryn hesitated. In the past, she never would have done something like this. But today, her thoughts were filled with images of Andrew's private parts. She was curious about her husband's. All day, the question of whose penis was bigger had lingered at the back of her mind, and now she needed an answer. "I want to feel it," Cathryn mumbled, hiding her face against his chest, her cheeks burning.

The shy confession sent a jolt through Andrew, his pulse quickening. Slowly, he loosened his grip, silently giving his consent.

Nestled against him, Cathryn let her hand travel lower, her fingers brushing over him as her eyes widened in surprise. Suddenly, everything made sense. Her first night with Damien had left her aching for days. Now she understood why.

Summoning her courage, she gently wrapped her fingers around his cock, feeling it harden in her hand.

A nervous thrill rushed through her. Had she known his size back then, she might never have dared to sleep with him at all.

She remembered catching a glimpse of Andrew's penis in the bathroom earlier. Now, with her hand on Damien's, she made the comparison in her mind. Both men were nearly identical.

Andrew shut his eyes and held her tightly, every muscle in his body coiled like a spring. The gentle pressure of her touch pushed him dangerously close to the edge. The moment

she squeezed, his restraint snapped. In one swift motion, he rolled over and pressed Cathryn beneath him.

Andrew leaned closer, his gaze dark with desire as he studied her face. “Are you satisfied with your husband’s size?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 295:

A faint smile curved her lips. “There’s no real difference between the two of you.”

Andrew shot her a sharp look, one eyebrow lifting. “Come again? What did you just say?”

Cathryn went stiff, caught off guard. She couldn't believe she'd let those words slip. Trying to cover it up, she forced a smile. "Honestly, I'm very satisfied."

Andrew moved closer, pressing his body against hers, a sly grin on his lips. "Are you sure you don't want to give it a try?"

Another time, Cathryn might have been drawn in by his touch, pretending to resist before giving in. Tonight was different. After realizing just how overwhelming he could be, all she felt was dread. It was going to hurt.

With an awkward laugh, Cathryn rolled to the side. "Maybe we should hold off until next time..."

Andrew wasn't having it. He pinned her down again, his gaze sharp. "What's your game? You get me all worked up and then try to run away?"

Cathryn protested, "All I did was touch you!"

Andrew's jaw clenched. "Well, now you're responsible."

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He leaned in, his kisses trailing along her arms, leaving no room for escape. The rest of the night blurred into heat and tangled breaths, their restraint dissolving completely.

By sunrise, Andrew's hunger for Cathryn still hadn't faded, and he drew her close again.

Later, Cathryn found herself wondering how she hadn't felt as much pain as she'd expected. Turning onto her side, she tried to make sense of it. Maybe it was because Andrew had far more experience than she did. Men born into privilege rarely lived ordinary lives—parties, cards, and women seemed woven into their world.

Cathryn started to get out of bed, but Andrew caught her by the wrist. "Stay with me a little longer."

Cathryn slipped into her clothes without meeting his eyes. "I've got work. I can't be late."

Frustration etched across Andrew's face as he raked his fingers through his hair. "Wouldn't it be better to just be a stay-at-home wife? Why do you insist on going to that pointless job?" It grated on him that Cathryn would rather head to work at Brooks Group than linger in bed with him.

As Cathryn fastened her buttons, she shot him a cold glance. "Should I just sit around and wait for the day you get tired of me and kick me out?"

Andrew jumped up, shaking his head. “That’s not what I meant at all.”

A steely calm settled over her. “I’ve never been interested in being anyone’s trophy wife.”

Without another word, she walked out, leaving the door swinging behind her.

Left alone, Andrew gave his cheek a half-hearted slap. They’d been fine last night—how had things turned so cold so quickly?

Determined to make sense of it, he got up. He spotted Margaret nearby, busy with her usual tasks. “Margaret, could I get your opinion on something?”

Margaret paused and turned to him. “Of course, Mr. Brooks. What’s on your mind?”

“Why do some women, who could have an easy life arranging flowers or sipping coffee, insist on going to work?” Andrew asked, trying to keep the irritation out of his voice.

Margaret’s lips curled into a knowing smile. “You’re talking about Mrs. Brooks, aren’t you?”

A pointed look from Andrew was all the answer she needed.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 296:

Growing thoughtful, Margaret explained, “Women need to feel secure. You see all those wives of the wealthy, always perfectly dressed? Underneath, they’re terrified of being replaced, of being cheated on, of losing everything overnight. Mrs. Brooks probably worries she could lose your favor. Having her own work gives her something to hold onto if the worst happens.”

Andrew’s expression softened as he listened. He remembered how Cathryn had been abandoned by Liam and turned away by the Moore family. If not for their meeting, she would have been left with nothing—no education, no career, no home.

Quietly, Andrew asked, “What would make a woman feel truly secure?”

Margaret let out a short laugh. “People change, but money stays. If you really want her to feel secure, let her control the family finances.”

Andrew raised an eyebrow, surprised.

“Is it really as simple as that?” Andrew asked.

Margaret shook her head, her eyes widening. “Very few men ever hand over all their money—especially with as much as your family has.”

A faint, crooked grin spread across Andrew’s face. Money didn’t matter to him. He’d give Cathryn his life if she asked.

As if remembering something, Andrew looked back at Margaret. “When ordinary couples get married, what do they usually prepare for the wedding?”

Margaret offered a thoughtful smile. “Usually, it’s nothing extravagant. Most grooms just make sure the bride has a place she can truly call home.”

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Andrew considered her words before heading back to his bedroom. Once inside, he pulled out his phone and called Ethan. “I want a full list of everything I own. That means stocks, bonds, cash, real estate—everything.”

On the other end, Ethan nearly dropped his phone. “Is something going on, Mr. Brooks? Are you thinking of disappearing? Should I be worried?”

Whenever his boss started talking about his entire fortune, it was rarely a good sign. Only major trouble could spark a move like this.

Andrew responded calmly, “Cathryn is my wife now. From this point forward, what’s mine belongs to her too.”

Relief washed over Ethan, and he let out a breath he hadn’t realized he was holding. He remembered the warning he’d given Andrew before the wedding. “I told you it’d be smart to notarize your assets before you got married. It’s not too late to make things official now.”

“I don’t want paperwork or barriers. I’m giving Cathryn everything,” Andrew said, not a trace of doubt in his voice.

Ethan’s jaw dropped. “You’re telling me you want to hand over all your billions? Just like that? She’s only been in your life for a few months.”

Having gotten along with Cathryn, Ethan had no issues with her. Still, shifting a massive fortune to her after only a few months of marriage felt reckless.

A sharp edge entered Andrew's tone. "If you can't handle this, Ethan, I'll find a new assistant."

Nervously, Ethan replied, "Maybe you should think this through, Mr. Brooks. Besides, technically, Damien is married to Cathryn, not you."

Cathryn didn't even know her husband was actually Andrew, and now Andrew wanted to give her the keys to his entire fortune. Ethan could hardly believe it.

Andrew retorted, "I give the orders. Don't make me say it twice."

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Chapter 297:

Swallowing his objections, Ethan replied, “Understood.”

Ethan knew that once Andrew set his mind on something, nothing could shake his resolve. Andrew was determined to give Cathryn everything she could ever want. And because Andrew was clearly swept off his feet, Ethan quietly resolved to stay vigilant—making sure no one could take advantage of that devotion.

The thought even pushed him toward a dangerous idea: reaching out to Cara to intervene. Andrew pinned him with a cold stare. “You remember why Karl got sent away, right?”

A chill crept down Ethan’s spine. “I’d never cross that line.”

He buried the impulse immediately. He dared not act rashly—Andrew was too perceptive. Once Ethan left, Andrew turned back to the unfinished security footage from yesterday. He watched Cathryn bolt out of the executive bathroom on the thirty-eighth floor.

That afternoon, he had barely started to undress when Cathryn barged right in. Her gaze had dropped for a split second before she flushed bright red and fled without even seeing

his face. The memory tugged a smile to Andrew's lips. Cathryn could get flustered so easily—yet last night, she had surprised him with her boldness.

Still pondering, Andrew watched the next part of the video: Cathryn being pulled into the break room by another girl. They leaned close, speaking in hushed voices. Andrew turned up the volume.

Cathryn's words came through clearly, full of shy disbelief. "It was really... a lot. Honestly, it's a bit overwhelming."

The other girl giggled. "His future wife is so lucky."

Andrew didn't like hearing Cathryn talk about something so private with someone else, yet a deeper smile still threatened at the corners of his mouth—until the realization hit him like ice. Cathryn didn't even know it had been him. She thought she'd seen someone else.

The warmth drained from Andrew's expression. His mood darkened as everything clicked into place. That was why she had been so bold last night. She hadn't been reaching for him—she'd been chasing an answer, making comparisons in her mind.

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With a sharp motion, Andrew snapped his laptop shut, exasperated. He couldn't shake the thought that Cathryn might already be comparing him to another man—one she found

more impressive. Her chilly attitude this morning suddenly made sense. The irony was that the “other man” was actually him, but she didn’t know that, which changed everything.

Still unable to let it go, Andrew grabbed his phone and fired off a message, hoping to get a read on her thoughts. “Were you satisfied with my performance last night?”

Cathryn had just arrived at the office when she received Damien’s message. She frowned as she read it. What was that supposed to mean? Was he fishing for compliments? Was he actually proud of his so-called experience with women?

Irritated, Cathryn shot back, “Honestly, it wasn’t anything to write home about.” There was no way she was going to give him the satisfaction of a compliment.

The blunt reply hit Andrew like a slap. So she really was dissatisfied.

He responded, “What exactly fell short? Not big enough? Didn’t last long enough? Tell me what wasn’t good enough.”

Cathryn saw the messages piling up and chose to ignore his barrage of questions as she stepped into the cleaning department. Aleena, the department head, wasted no time. With a mocking smile, she said, “You’re quite something, latching onto Nick.”

Aleena smirked derisively. Rumor had it—courtesy of Vanessa—that Cathryn was a natural at seduction. Nick had fallen under her spell instantly, which had sent Cara into a rage and resulted in him being shipped overseas.

Crossing her arms, Aleena looked Cathryn up and down. “Now that your little protector is gone, let’s see how you handle things around here.”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 298:

Pulling on her cleaning uniform, Cathryn kept her cool. “Look, I’m not here to start drama. There’s no need to pick a fight with me.”

Aleena bristled, her glare sharpening. “You’ve got a lot of nerve talking back. I’ll do whatever I like. Try and stop me.”

Bessie came hobbling past, her arms shaking under the weight of a sloshing bucket. In one swift, careless move, Aleena kicked it aside, sending water everywhere—and knocking Bessie to the floor.

“Bessie!” Without thinking, Cathryn rushed over and knelt beside her.

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Leaning heavily on Cathryn’s arm, Bessie struggled upright. “Don’t worry about me. Aleena and Vanessa are thick as thieves. If you stand up to Aleena, you’ll only make things harder for yourself. Best to just let it go.”

Honest and hardworking, Bessie had never sucked up to Aleena. That made her an easy target, and being tripped or bullied wasn’t out of the ordinary for her.

Cathryn steadied Bessie, her voice firm. “Nobody deserves to be treated this way. There’s no reason you should put up with it.”

A weary smile flickered across Bessie’s lips. “I’ll manage. As long as you and Sophie are safe, that’s good enough for me.”

The words struck a chord in Cathryn, her throat tightening as she blinked back tears. She thought of her own mother—how much that woman had endured, how many times she'd swallowed her pride just to get through the day.

Cathryn's voice trembled. "Letting them walk all over you only makes them more aggressive, Bessie. You shouldn't have to endure this."

Bessie paused, her eyes clouded with worry. "But what choice do we have? We're nobodies here. All we can do is try to keep our heads down."

Helping Bessie to her feet, Cathryn said, "Go get changed and see if you're hurt anywhere."

Nervously, Bessie darted a look at Aleena. "I'm fine, really." If Aleena saw her step out of line, there would be hell to pay.

Cathryn squeezed Bessie's hand in reassurance. "Don't worry. I'll deal with Aleena if anything happens."

Bessie gingerly tested her ankle, wincing at the pain, but something in Cathryn's expression gave her courage. She nodded. "All right, I'll go."

Aleena's voice rang out, sharp as a whip. "You think you can just walk out, Bessie?"

Stepping between Bessie and Aleena, Cathryn stood tall. "She's leaving because I told her to. If you've got a problem, bring it to me."

Aleena curled her lip in disdain. "You think you're untouchable just because Nick once defended you? Nick's a kid. Cara already shipped him off. You're on your own now—and I'm about to make sure you're out of here for good!"

Cathryn met Aleena's glare with a cold smirk. "You want me gone? Go ahead and try. Let's see if you can actually pull it off."

Aleena's hands shook with anger. No one ever talked back to her—certainly not like this. She yanked out her phone and dialed Alan. "Hey, get over here. I've got someone for you to fire."

Alan arrived in record time. One look at Cathryn—whose file held barely any credentials—made him scowl. "I'm not surprised. You've got nothing to show for yourself. Come with me so we can finish your termination paperwork."

A nasty smile spread across Aleena's face. "Thought you could take me on? You'll regret ever stepping out of line."

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Chapter 299:

Inside the cleaning department, Aleena called all the shots. Her word was law.

Cathryn refused to accept defeat. She quickly sent Ethan a message. “Ethan, I need you in the cleaning department right now.”

The message sent a chill down Ethan’s spine. He’d already instructed Victor to move Cathryn to administration. Why was she still here?

Wasting no time, Ethan jumped into the nearest elevator and made his way down. He stopped by Human Resources, only to learn that Victor was away on business.

Not waiting another second, Ethan hurried to the cleaning department.

When Cathryn caught sight of Ethan approaching, she faced Aleena and asked, “Since when do you own this place? What makes you think you have the authority to fire people without a good reason?”

Aleena lifted her chin, smug. “This is my department. Not even Mr. Brooks can question how I run things here.”

Cathryn’s voice turned razor-sharp with sarcasm. “I’ve heard everyone in the cleaning department has to give you gifts. And the ones who don’t end up in trouble.”

Aleena snorted, dropping all pretense now that Cathryn was supposedly finished. “That’s right. Bessie’s a cheapskate, so I make her life miserable. It’s just the way things work.”

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As Cathryn bent to retrieve Bessie’s spilled bucket, Aleena kicked it again. Cathryn seized the moment, stumbling as if she’d lost her balance.

Just then, Ethan’s voice cut through the room. “Since when did you get to play queen around here?”

Aleena wasted no time accusing Cathryn. “Ethan, Cathryn has no skills. I don’t know how she managed to slip through the cracks here, but I’m letting her go today.”

Without hesitation, Ethan glanced at Alan. “Take Cathryn and walk her through the paperwork.”

Alan gave a curt nod. “We were just about to handle her termination.”

Before anyone could move, Ethan’s voice cut through the tension. “That won’t be necessary. As of now, Cathryn is transferring to administration. She’ll be organizing files in the CEO’s office.”

Aleena’s jaw dropped. Alan just stood there, speechless. Nothing like this had ever happened at Brooks Group. No one from the cleaning crew had ever jumped straight into administration.

Aleena quickly found her voice. “Ethan, you can’t be serious! You’re putting someone who scrubs floors in charge of CEO documents?”

“Her résumé is empty. No education, no credentials,” Alan added, shaking his head. “How can you trust her in the executive office?”

Ethan's hands balled into fists, his knuckles cracking. If they hadn't been standing inside company walls, he would have thrown a punch at both of them without thinking twice. How dare they underestimate Cathryn like that?

Ethan exhaled slowly, forcing himself to stay calm. "Aleena, pack your things. You're done here." Then he turned to Alan. "Walk her through the paperwork."

Panic flashed in Aleena's eyes as she clutched Ethan's sleeve. "Wait! I've given years to this company. Cathryn's barely been here a week, and she's disrespected me from the start. If anyone should go, it's her, not me!"

Cathryn spoke up calmly. "Ethan, don't fire Aleena. Just demote her. Let her do regular cleaning work instead of leading the team."

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 300:

Aleena's eyes blazed as she snapped, "Who do you think you are, telling Ethan what to do?"

To everyone's surprise, Ethan nodded. "That's fair. Aleena stays, but she's no longer in charge."

Aleena was left speechless. She couldn't understand why Ethan was listening to Cathryn at all.

She bit back her protests, reading the warning in Ethan's eyes. If she wanted to keep her job, she would have to swallow her pride for now. As long as she stayed in the department, she told herself, she'd have another chance to claw her way back up.

Spotting Bessie nearby, Cathryn turned to Ethan. "Since the cleaning department needs a new supervisor, I'd like to suggest someone."

Ethan's smile was genuine. "Go ahead."

Cathryn beckoned Bessie over. "Bessie's been working here for years. She's dependable, honest, and never complains. She's perfect for the job."

Bessie waved her hands in protest. "I'm not cut out to be in charge."

Cathryn smiled encouragingly. "You're the most experienced here. No one knows the job better than you do. It's time you stepped up."

Ethan agreed. "We just need someone who can keep this place spotless and manage the team."

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Leaning closer, Cathryn whispered to Bessie, "As the head, your salary could at least double."

Bessie's eyes grew huge. "Wait, the head of cleaning earns that much?"

Cathryn grinned. "Absolutely."

After a moment's hesitation, Bessie nodded. "If you really think I can do it, then I'll try."

Cathryn broke into laughter. “Bessie, you’ve got everyone’s trust. You’ll do great.”

Lowering her voice, Bessie teased, “If I get a raise, I can finally save up for my son’s wedding—and maybe he’ll have a shot at you someday.”

Cathryn nudged her, laughing. “Quit it, Bessie!”

Bessie chuckled, her eyes dancing with mischief. The truth was, she wasn’t really joking.

A look of panic flashed across Aleena’s face. “No way... Bessie can’t be head,” she murmured, dread creeping into her voice. After all the times she’d pushed Bessie around, the thought of answering to her now was almost too much to bear.

Bessie didn’t blink. Her tone turned cold as she addressed Aleena. “If you’re not happy with the new arrangement, you’re free to leave. Alan can walk you right through the exit process.”

Cathryn shot Bessie a discreet thumbs-up, realizing for the first time just how capable Bessie truly was. Everything Bessie had put up with had been for her daughter’s future at Brooks Group.

Faced with reality, Aleena fell silent. She understood how hard it was to land a job at Brooks Group. At her age, she had nowhere else to go.

Peeling off her old cleaning uniform, Bessie tossed it at Aleena's feet, followed by the bucket. "Get to work. From today on, you'll be cleaning every restroom—from the first floor all the way up to the thirty-eighth."

Aleena's eyes filled with frustrated tears as she caught sight of Cathryn behind Ethan, a sly smile playing on Cathryn's lips.

Grinding her teeth, Aleena realized Cathryn had played her cards well and now had Ethan in her corner. But no matter how capable Cathryn was, Vanessa was the future Mrs. Brooks. With Vanessa backing her, Aleena was sure she'd get another shot at power. Clenching her jaw, she snatched up the bucket and stormed off toward the restrooms, anger simmering beneath the surface.

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