

## ONCE THE FOOLISH WIFE, NOW HIS ETERNAL OBSESSION

Chapter 3:

Karl followed Andrew's line of sight, and his gaze landed on Cathryn. He frowned. Something about her sudden appearance felt off—the timing was far too convenient.

“Mr. Brooks, please tread carefully. This could be a trap,” Karl murmured, keeping his voice low.

Andrew's expression turned even more unreadable. “Find out what brought her here.”

With a silent nod, Karl slipped away.

Not recognizing Andrew, Cathryn turned to leave.

Andrew's voice, edged with sarcasm, called after her. “What's this—playing hard to get now?”

Cathryn's brow knit in confusion. “You've got the wrong person,” she shot back.

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Andrew stepped into her path, hands still in his pockets, looking down at her with disdain. “Funny. This morning, you pretended nothing happened between

us last night. And now, just hours later, you show up in front of me under the flimsy excuse of a chance meeting—fishing for my attention, huh?”

Cathryn’s heartbeat stuttered.

So he was the man from last night.

Karl hurried back and leaned in to speak quietly in Andrew’s ear. “Her name’s Cathryn Moore. She’s Richard Moore’s oldest daughter. Her mother died a little while ago—she cut her wrists.”

Andrew’s jaw tightened. For the first time, his gaze dropped to Cathryn’s hand. A crimson stain spread across her palm, bleeding into the fabric of her dress.

“Get her cleaned up,” he said, clipped and cold.

Cathryn was taken to Andrew’s place. After a hot shower and a change of clothes, a hint of color finally returned to her cheeks.

Andrew lounged across the sofa, absently rolling a silver lighter between his fingers, his gaze never leaving her. “So tell me—how did you manage to fool my grandmother?”

Cathryn stood across from him, her posture rigid. “I’ve never even met your grandmother. And I appreciate what you did, Mr. Brooks. But if you don’t need anything else, I’ll be on my way.”

A short, sharp laugh escaped Andrew. She knew his last name, yet she still pretended ignorance. Fine. As long as she wasn't Cara's pawn, he didn't mind a little game.

"Let's make a deal."

He tossed the lighter onto the table and fixed her with a steady look.

Cathryn froze. A deal? Over what? She had nothing left—no money, no connections. Why would a Brooks want anything from her?

He slid a document across the glass surface. "Read this and sign."

She picked it up, wary. "What is it?"

"A prenup," he said, folding one leg over the other, every inch the confident, unshakable bachelor.

Cathryn's eyes widened for a heartbeat, surprise flickering across her face.

He smirked, his eyes glinting. "Isn't this exactly what you wanted? You've been after the Brooks name all along, haven't you?"

Her jaw tightened, irritation simmering. "You've got it wrong, Mr. Brooks. I already have a husband."

Andrew straightened and closed the distance between them, his shadow swallowing her in darkness.

A trace of cedar and smoke lingered around him—sharp, clean—sending her pulse racing.

His mouth curled into a taunting smile. “If you were that loyal to your husband, why didn’t you refuse to spend the night with me?”

Heat crept up Cathryn’s neck. He’d been drunk last night, slow to react. If she had fought harder, she might have gotten away. But she hadn’t...

Andrew lowered his voice, his fingers tipping her chin up as he studied her face. “My grandmother chose you for a reason. Divorce your husband. Marry me instead. You won’t want for anything.”

Cathryn’s eyes flickered. He was operating under a mistaken impression about her. Maybe—just maybe—she could use that to her advantage.

Jordyn’s warning rang with a cold kind of sense. Alone, Cathryn’s strength was limited. With the Brooks name behind her, everything might change. The man standing before her radiated power; even his home screamed privilege and influence. He wasn’t just another wealthy heir—he was someone who mattered.

With her mother gone and every door slammed in her face, Cathryn had nothing left to lose.

She squared her shoulders and met his gaze head-on. “All right. You have yourself a deal.”

She flipped through the prenup, her eyes skating over lines of dense legal language until the words blurred together. With a quiet sigh, she shoved it back toward him. “Read it out loud. I’m not wading through all that.”

Andrew lifted an eyebrow, clearly unamused. No one ever asked him to do something so trivial. People usually tripped over themselves just to earn his attention.

“I have dyslexia,” Cathryn explained, her tone flat. “All those words make my head hurt.”

He hesitated, suspicion flickering across his face. For a moment, he wondered if she couldn’t read at all. Then he dismissed the thought. His grandmother wouldn’t choose someone without an education.

Andrew tossed the prenup aside. “You don’t need every detail. Just three things matter.”

He held up a finger. “First, this marriage lasts only one year. When the year is up, no matter what happens, it ends.”

Cathryn’s brow lifted in mild surprise. Only a year? That was easier than she’d expected. “I’m fine with that,” she said without a trace of hesitation.

Andrew’s stare sharpened. “Second, if you get pregnant, the baby stays, but you leave. You don’t get to claim the child.”

Her eyes narrowed. Cold. But she had already decided—no children with him. “Understood. And the third?”

Andrew stepped closer, his voice quiet and final. “Last one: you don’t get my heart. Don’t bother trying for love. I expect nothing from you, and you should expect nothing from me.”

A flicker of something unreadable crossed Cathryn’s eyes, gone as quickly as it appeared. Yes, he was attractive—intense, commanding. But to her, he was just another man in a world full of them. Love wasn’t even on her list.

Without hesitation, she reached for the pen and scrawled her name. “As you wish, Mr. Brooks.”