

Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 331:

Cathryn responded with a smile. “You said it yourself. Sorting out a spreadsheet isn’t that difficult.”

Vanessa folded her arms and glared at Cathryn and Sophie. “Alright. Ten minutes it is. If you can’t finish in time, the two of you will be heading to HR to hand in your resignations.”

Her heels clicked against the floor as she strode out of the room. Right away, Sophie grabbed Cathryn’s arm, worry written all over her face. “Cathryn, you don’t get how computers work. Organizing this mess is way harder than you think. Vanessa’s data is a total disaster, and she’s clearly trying to set me up.”

Cathryn patted Sophie’s shoulder gently. “Just take a breather. Go grab some coffee and calm your nerves. Maybe things will look a little clearer after a break.”

Casting a worried glance at the nonsense scattered across her screen, Sophie took her mug and headed to the break room. “I think I might actually lose my mind today.”

Once Sophie walked away, Cathryn's hands moved over the keyboard. In just a few quick keystrokes, the jumble on the spreadsheet sorted itself into neat, readable data.

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Coffee in hand, Sophie returned and sank into her chair. A sigh slipped out as she gazed at the monitor. Then, staring at the orderly numbers and letters, she let out a stunned gasp. "Oh my." Her eyes widened as she leaned closer. "How did the mess just vanish like that?"

Cathryn walked over to join her, calm and unhurried. "I told you it's not as tough as it looks. You sent me those study guides, remember? They showed me how to handle this. Just sort the data from smallest to largest. It barely takes two minutes."

Rubbing her tired eyes, Sophie shook her head. "But it was all just nonsense a minute ago."

Putting on an innocent face, Cathryn shrugged. "Was it? I don't really get what you mean."

Sophie glanced around the empty office. Had someone secretly helped her?

With the administrative department scrambling for the code rollout, not a soul was left in the room.

Her eyes shifted back to Cathryn, who now sat nearby.

With her chin propped in one hand, Cathryn used a single finger to peck at the keyboard.

Sophie remembered that when she was first learning to use a computer, she had typed the same slow, clumsy way. There was no way Cathryn had suddenly become a tech expert. She had never taken any classes, and she barely knew how to open a spreadsheet, let alone fix one.

A frown creased Sophie's forehead. Was her memory playing tricks on her? Maybe the gibberish had never existed at all.

Just then, Vanessa stormed back in. "Your time's up."

Sophie pressed "Save" and sent the file over. "The spreadsheet is done."

Vanessa opened the file and studied the contents. Everything was perfectly arranged. She stared in disbelief. The spreadsheet should have been an unsolvable mess after the way she had scrambled it. Yet every number and letter appeared exactly as it should.

At that moment, Howard walked over and asked, "Has Sophie finished the spreadsheet?"

Cathryn stood and answered, “She finished in less than five minutes.”

“That’s remarkable. I knew we could count on a top graduate from Olekgan University. I’ll be sure to mention your hard work to Mr. Brooks at our next meeting.” Howard gave Sophie a quick thumbs-up.

“Thank you so much.” A bright smile spread across Sophie’s face. She could hardly believe Andrew might hear about her efforts.

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Vanessa stepped closer and fixed Sophie with a cold stare. “If you’re even thinking of going after Mr. Brooks,” she warned, “you’ll regret it.”

From her seat nearby, Cathryn crossed her legs and replied in a relaxed tone, “Mr. Brooks isn’t married yet. Let’s see who wins him over.”

With a scowl, Vanessa shot Cathryn a pointed look. “Don’t pretend your motives are pure. You’ve only been working this hard so you can get close to Mr. Brooks.”

Cathryn arched an eyebrow. “I admit I’d like to know Mr. Brooks better, but not for the same reasons as you.”

Sophie’s brow knit. Her mind flashed back to the first time she had met Cathryn, when Cathryn had expressed her wish to take her place delivering a file to the CEO’s office. Maybe Cathryn wanted to marry Andrew too.

“Seriously? Sophie, both you and Cathryn are in love with the same man? Well, I’m eager to see how you two can still call yourselves friends.” Vanessa’s eyes glinted as she flashed Sophie a mocking smile. Sophie stood stiffly by the desk, her brows drawn tight.

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When Vanessa finally drifted out, Cathryn crossed the room and lowered her voice. “I truly do not have romantic feelings for Mr. Brooks.”

Sophie’s mouth tilted into a wry, half-hearted smile. “It’s hard not to, isn’t it? He’s the kind of man a thousand women would chase. What single girl wouldn’t?” But a bitter tang of envy clung to her words like the aftertaste of strong coffee. Liking the same man as her closest friend was a wound she couldn’t quite hide.

Cathryn faltered, unsure how to untangle the misunderstanding.

Sophie lifted her chin and tried for a brave smile. “You don’t need to explain. My crush is one-sided. I know exactly where I stand. With my background, I would never be anything more than a passing shadow to him.”

Cathryn shook her head. “Don’t say that. As long as Mr. Brooks isn’t married, there is always a chance.”

Sophie lowered her gaze, her lashes trembling. “You’re younger than I am, prettier, and your figure turns heads. You’re the one with a chance.”

Cathryn clenched her teeth, then forced the truth out. “Actually, I’m married...”

“I know,” Sophie murmured. “You told me last night.”

Cathryn's voice dropped to a near whisper. "What I mean is... I've been married, divorced, and married again."

Sophie's head snapped up, eyes wide. "You're on your second marriage?"

Cathryn reached out and gently covered her friend's mouth. "Keep your voice down. Second marriages are hardly something to shout about."

Sophie's eyes swept over Cathryn from head to toe in disbelief. "You're only twenty-two, and you've been married twice?"

Cathryn nodded. "I left home last night after a fight with my husband."

Sophie pressed her lips together, her expression twisting as she struggled to find words.

Cathryn sighed, the sound heavy with resignation. "So you see, I can't be with your brother. I'm already someone else's wife."

"Why didn't you tell me this sooner?" Sophie asked, her voice tight with disappointment. She felt foolish, as though she and her mother had been nurturing hope for nothing.

Cathryn lifted one shoulder in a weary shrug. “It’s not exactly something I’m proud of.”

Sophie reached out and squeezed Cathryn’s shoulder gently. “It’s alright. Just make sure you try to build a good life with the man you’re with now.”

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A bitter smile tugged at Cathryn’s lips. “That’s easier said than done. He’s already found someone new.”

Sophie drew in a sharp breath. “You’re getting divorced again?”

Cathryn quickly pressed her palm over Sophie’s mouth. “Must you shout every secret I share?”

Sophie pushed Kathryn’s hand away and lowered her voice. “Then are you planning a third marriage?”

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Cathryn shook her head slowly. “I don’t know.” Neither of her marriages had been part of any plan. And now, it seemed, she was stumbling toward yet another divorce without even meaning to.

Sophie let out a soft laugh, full of disbelief. “Cathryn, your marital history could fill a whole novel.”

Cathryn’s sigh was deeper this time, heavy with something close to shame. “Suppose I do have feelings for Mr. Brooks. Do you really think a man like him would accept someone who’s been married twice?”

Sophie frowned in thought. “You’re beautiful, Kathryn. Even after two divorces, men will still line up for you. But you never received an education... I’ve never heard of a high-society lady who can’t even read.”

Cathryn shrugged.

Sophie pulled her into a sudden hug. “It’s alright. Even without a degree, you’re standing here working beside me—a graduate of Olekgan University. I’m proud of you.”

Their moment was interrupted as Howard strode into the room. “Back up the data quickly. We’re rolling out new software this afternoon.”

Sophie immediately turned back to her desk and immersed herself in the task.

Cathryn watched her with quiet detachment. She itched to tell Sophie there was no point backing up that data. The code was useless.

While everyone else busied themselves with lines of code and test runs, Kathryn sat calmly in her corner, idly tapping at her keyboard, her eyes fixed on the screen. Behind that casual exterior, she had breached the Brooks Group’s

...surveillance system. Her monitor now displayed a mosaic of live camera feeds from offices across the building.

Sophie, fully aware of Cathryn's supposed incompetence, said nothing. She simply took on Cathryn's share of the workload without complaint, assuming her friend was merely passing the time.

Then something caught Cathryn's attention. On one of the feeds, Vanessa was slipping quietly into the stairwell.

The stairwell cameras had been tampered with—but that was nothing Cathryn couldn't handle. Her fingers flew across the keys, restoring the feed in seconds.

The image blinked to life, and Cathryn focused on Vanessa's movements. Vanessa climbed steadily, floor after floor, until she stopped at the thirty-seventh. A quick swipe of a card granted her access through a secure door.

The thirty-seventh floor—the equipment room. The heart of Brooks Group. Behind that door were the company's main servers, the digital vault that held every scrap of corporate data and the keys to its entire network.

Cathryn's heartbeat slowed. She broke into the server's back end as Vanessa entered the room.

On-screen, Vanessa pulled a hard drive from her bag and connected it to the mainframe. She opened a source code file and began planting a virus.

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Cathryn's eyes narrowed. In seconds, she identified the malicious code. If that virus ran, the servers would collapse. Brooks Group's entire data infrastructure—years of projects, client information, and trade secrets—would disintegrate. The fallout would be catastrophic.

A closer look confirmed the worst: the virus was irreversible once triggered. But for Cathryn, neutralizing it would be child's play. A few deft keystrokes and it would vanish without a trace. The real question was... should she?

The code had come from Jordyn. If the virus did its job, Jordyn would shoulder the blame entirely. And the destruction of Brooks Group's servers was not just a corporate disaster—it was a crime that could end in a prison sentence.

A steely glint flickered in Cathryn's eyes as she drew her hand back.

Across town, in a dimly lit rented apartment, Zoe perched on the edge of the sofa, her voice low but charged. "Vanessa pulled it off."

Jordyn blinked, thrown off balance. "Pulled what off?"

Richard, leaning against the window frame, exhaled slowly before answering. "That code you wrote—we had Vanessa slip a virus into it. Since we knew you'd be furious, we kept quiet."

The words hit Jordyn like a slap. She shot to her feet. "Are you insane? Don't you want to work with Brooks Group anymore?"

Zoe remained calm, her gaze fixed on Jordyn. "We're still working with Brooks Group. But our allegiance is with Cara now, not Andrew."

Jordyn's brow furrowed, confusion and disbelief mixing on her face. "You're siding with Cara to destroy Andrew?"

Zoe's lips curved into a cold, resolute smile. "Exactly."

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Jordyn shook her head. “Andrew’s the stronger one. More power, more reach. Why gamble on Cara?”

Richard’s stare cut into her, his voice dropping to a heavy murmur. “Because Andrew... is Damien.”

“Andrew...” Jordyn breathed, her voice trembling as the revelation hit. Her eyes widened in disbelief. “He’s Cathryn’s husband?”

Zoe’s reply was cold and unyielding. “Cathryn’s husband is Andrew. And there is no universe in which he would work with us.”

Jordyn sank onto the edge of the bed as if her legs had given out. “No, that can’t be... Wasn’t Andrew supposed to be disfigured? Crippled?”

Zoe shook her head slowly, a bitter smile tugging at her lips. “All an act. He staged the whole thing to throw Cara off his trail.”

The memory of Andrew’s striking features and the powerful cut of his frame slammed into Jordyn like a blow. Jealousy roared through her veins, hot and frantic. Cathryn had actually married Andrew. Cathryn—that divorced woman—had married the richest man in Olekgan.

In Jordyn's eyes, Andrew was everything Liam had never been: wealthy beyond imagination, commanding, dangerously handsome, built like someone born to rule. How could Cathryn, of all people, have ended up with a man like him?

Jordyn's nails dug into her palms until they left crescent-shaped marks. But envy soon curdled into fear. This was not the moment to spiral into resentment.

"The moment the virus-laced program executes," Zoe said, her tone clipped and ruthless, "Brooks Group's central servers will collapse. Andrew will have no choice but to step down in disgrace. A catastrophic failure like that will ruin him."

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All color drained from Jordyn's face. She shook her head weakly, whispering, "No, the program must not fail."

Zoe squeezed her hand, forcing a thin smile. "Relax. Cara promised that no matter what happens, she'll help unfreeze Moore Trading—and she'll keep pouring money into Watson Tech."

Jordyn stared blankly at Zoe, her pulse roaring in her ears. "But if the program fails... Andrew and I signed a wager agreement..."

Richard's expression darkened like a storm cloud. "And what happens if the program does fail?"

The words caught in Jordyn's throat. Tears welled in her eyes and spilled down her cheeks.

Zoe shoved her shoulder roughly. "Speak, damn you."

Jordyn bit her lip until it bled. "If the program has a flaw, Moore Trading and Watson Tech will both fall under Brooks Group's control."

“You fool!” Richard exploded, leaping to his feet. His palm cracked across Jordyn’s face with a savage slap.

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Jordyn crumpled to the floor, stunned, her cheek blazing with pain. For a long moment, she couldn’t even breathe.

Zoe sat frozen, horror tightening her chest. Jordyn had gone behind their backs and signed a wager without telling them.

Clutching her swollen cheek, Jordyn scrambled upright, desperation thick in her voice. “Mom, please—tell Vanessa to stop.”

Zoe shivered, panic clawing at her chest. She turned frantically toward Richard. “If the program fails, Moore Trading will belong to Andrew. We’ll be left with nothing.”

Richard’s fists clenched, his knuckles bone-white. “If we fail to cripple Brooks Group’s servers, Cara will come after us. And with Cathryn as his wife, Andrew will never let us live it down.” They were caught between hammer and anvil.

“You two damned idiots!” Richard spat, fury overtaking him. He lashed out again, blows raining down on both Zoe and Jordyn.

“Richard, stop!” Zoe sobbed, throwing her arms up to shield herself. “This is not the time—what are we supposed to do? I can’t live in a rental forever!”

His breathing came in ragged bursts, but he finally stopped.

“We’ve crossed the point of no return,” he said, his voice hard. “We might as well ruin Brooks Group’s servers.”

Tears blurred Zoe’s sight. “Then the Moore family is finished...” Moore Trading had been their last lifeline. Once it was gone, they would have nothing.

“Then tie yourself to Cara!” Richard snarled. “She’s our only chance now.”

Even if they had offended Andrew, there was still Cara. But if Cara abandoned them, they would lose everything. And if Andrew discovered their hand in this, he would destroy them without mercy.

Zoe swallowed hard and snatched up her phone. “Has the program launched yet?” she demanded.

Vanessa’s voice crackled through the speaker. “In less than ten minutes, Brooks Group’s central servers will be nothing but ash.”

Richard's jaw tightened. "Cara must already be heading to Brooks Group. Go and help her."

Zoe and Jordyn hastily straightened their clothes, tugged their hats low over their faces, and slipped out into the night.

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As they hurried down the street, Jordyn leaned heavily against Zoe, tears glistening on her lashes. "Dad never used to yell at me... and now he hits me at every turn."

Zoe brushed her fingers over the angry welt on Jordyn's cheek. "Now that he knows you're not his blood, the fact that he still lets us stay in the Moore household is more grace than we deserve."

The reminder of her true parentage made Jordyn's insides twist. Ever since that revelation, she had become the punchline of every joke in Olekgan's high society. Her fortunes had crumbled after she married Liam, while Cathryn's kept rising—until she had even managed to marry Andrew.

But then Jordyn consoled herself that it didn't matter. Today, Andrew would be torn from his throne at Brooks Group by Cara. Cara would never spare him... She might even drive him and Cathryn out of Olekgan altogether.

The thought steadied Jordyn's trembling hands.

At Brooks Group headquarters, less than ten minutes after the program began to run, chaos struck. One by one, every computer screen in the building went black.

"There's a virus!" someone shouted. "All my files are gone!"

"Damn it—my backup's gone too. Everything's unrecoverable!"

Panic surged through the offices like wildfire.

The head of IT rushed toward Ethan, his face ashen. “The virus is highly aggressive—it obliterated not just the main system, but every backup we had.”

“What?” Ethan’s voice cracked, his face draining of color. The backups and servers were gone. The entire database—obliterated. Brooks Group stood on the edge of ruin.

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Andrew stormed into his office, his pulse hammering after Ethan’s urgent call. The moment he learned even the backups had been annihilated, the ground seemed to shift beneath him.

Ethan’s expression was grave. “The virus is worse than we imagined. The central servers are gone. Every last backup has been wiped clean.”

Andrew’s jaw tightened. “Bring in the hackers.”

Ethan shook his head. “I already tried. They said there’s nothing more they can do.”

A dangerous shadow darkened Andrew’s eyes. He had underestimated Cara.

Just then, the door swung open. Cara swept inside like a queen entering her throne room, several board members trailing meekly behind her. Her smile was sharp enough to cut glass. “Andrew, your recklessness has dragged Brooks Group to the edge of collapse. If you have any pride left, you will resign.”

Andrew’s gaze slid over the people behind Cara. “So these are the traitors you placed within Brooks Group.” None dared meet his stare.

Cara’s lips curved with satisfaction. “They are not traitors—they are realists. They know which way the wind blows, and they chose wisely.”

Andrew’s voice rang like tempered steel. “Brooks Group’s data system is in ruins. Do you really think Nick can hold it up on his own?”

Cara stepped forward, chin high. “Nick is already eighteen. When your father’s accident left you in charge, you were only seventeen. If you managed, why wouldn’t he?”

Andrew gave her a cold smile, laced with pity. Pathetic. She would sacrifice everything for her son, never seeing that power was the last thing her son truly craved.

“What value is there in the president’s title if Brooks Group itself lies in ashes?” His voice sliced through the room. He hadn’t expected Cara to be this ruthless—willing to drag the entire empire into ruin just to unseat him.

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Cara laughed, low and triumphant. “Who says Brooks Group is finished? You just delivered Moore Trading and Watson Tech into my hands. With those, rebuilding will be child’s play.”

At the doorway, Jordyn and Zoe froze, shock pinning them in place. Zoe stumbled inside, panic breaking her composure. “Mrs. Brooks, that is not what you promised me! You said if I helped you destroy Andrew, you would support Moore Trading!”

Cara turned a disdainful glance on her. “And you neglected to mention the wager agreement you signed. Now the contract rules.”

Zoe's legs gave way beneath her, and she collapsed to the floor. Moore Trading was gone—irretrievably gone.

Jordyn stood rooted, her eyes fixed on Andrew. So Damien was Andrew. That devastating face, that commanding presence—it left her reeling. How could Cathryn possibly deserve a man like him?

The door banged open again, and Liam stumbled in, pale and trembling. Fear etched every line of his face at the news of the program failing. “Mr. Brooks, there must be some mistake. Whatever problem the program has—Jordyn can fix it.”

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Andrew slid a laptop across the desk. His stare was merciless. “Then let her fix it.”

Color drained from Jordyn's cheeks.

Liam shoved her forward in desperation. “You're Kestrel! You can handle this!”

But Jordyn's hands shook as tears welled. She knew nothing.

Just then, the head of Tech burst into the room. “Mr. Brooks—the data has been restored!”

Andrew’s eyes narrowed. He leaned over to check the screen. Files blinked back to life, one after another.

Outside his office, cheers rippled through the building. “The data’s back!”

Andrew’s voice turned sharp. “Explain.”

“The virus was neutralized,” the Tech head said breathlessly. “It carried a hidden bug—one that only surfaced in large-scale deployment.”

Andrew’s brow furrowed. “A hidden bug?”

“Our guess is this was an early version of Kestrel’s program.”

Jordyn’s heart seized. Cathryn had lied to her.

Cara whirled on Jordyn, eyes blazing with fury. “You are not Kestrel! You deceived me!”

Liam looked the most gutted. He staggered back, face ashen. He had married Jordyn for the prestige of Kestrel, only to discover he had been nothing but a fool. His legs faltered and he stumbled back two steps, his complexion drained of color. He had cast Cathryn aside for a woman built on lies.

The legal team arrived, contracts in hand. “Mr. Watson, Ms. Moore,” one of them intoned, “per the wager agreement, Watson Tech and Moore Trading now belong to Brooks Group. Please come with us.”

Zoe, Jordyn, and Liam were escorted out, their downfall swift and absolute.

Cara turned back to Andrew, her voice venomous. “Your recklessness has bled Brooks Group dry. Step down.”

Andrew’s eyes were glacial. “And what losses have I caused?”

“The servers!” she snapped. “Even if the data was restored, the servers were destroyed. That alone is catastrophic!”

Andrew rotated the laptop toward her, his tone edged with scorn. “Take a good look. The data is intact. The servers are fully operational.”

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Cara froze, her composure cracking as her eyes went wide. Impossible. That virus should have left nothing standing.

“It was Kestrel,” the head of Tech added grimly. “No one else could have pulled this off.”

Cara’s face flickered with unease. Kestrel had intervened for Andrew’s sake.

“We ran every check on the program beforehand,” the head of Tech continued. “The virus was planted only this morning.”

Andrew's eyes cut to Cara, cold and razor-sharp. She never sullied her hands directly; that was her way. Yet with the thirty-seventh-floor surveillance conveniently disabled in advance, he had nothing tangible to tie her to the sabotage.

"Mr. Brooks," Ethan interrupted, his voice taut, "an anonymous email just arrived."

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Andrew opened the attachment, and there it was: footage of Vanessa ascending the stairwell, slipping like a shadow into the server room.

Andrew set the laptop down in front of Cara with deliberate weight, the screen frozen on the incriminating footage. "Vanessa is your plant, is she not?"

Cara's reply came smooth as glass. "I know Douglas, but Vanessa? Not so well."

Andrew gave a derisive snort. "She's been parading around the company, claiming she and I are engaged—and using your name to bolster the lie. And you expect me to believe you barely know her?"

A flicker betrayed Cara's composure. Her jaw clenched. She should never have trusted Zoe and Jordyn—two liabilities, fools who had brought her nothing but trouble.

“I only know her grandfather. Vanessa herself is close to Jordyn. After Jordyn handed you the program, she regretted it and created a virus to destroy it,” Cara countered, delivering the words as though they were irrefutable.

Andrew’s gaze was razor-sharp, contempt curling at the corner of his mouth. Cara was slippery, always weaving excuses out of thin air. “Vanessa was placed inside the company by you. Whatever she did, it lies at your feet,” he said flatly.

Cara’s teeth ground together. She had paraded her influence, boasting of spies embedded within Brooks Group, hoping to topple Andrew—only to have it blow up in her face. Her voice steadied into forced calm. “What do you want?”

Andrew’s reply was a blade. “Give up your role on the board. Take care of my father.”

Her fingers trembled against the clasp of her handbag.

Andrew turned to the board members behind her. When they realized the lost data had been restored, hope had bled out of them. Panic had taken its place, followed by the slow collapse of defiance.

“I have no tolerance for betrayal,” Andrew declared, his tone like a gavel striking. “Submit your resignations to HR. And do not return to Brooks Group.”

The verdict was final. His gaze did not waver.

One by one, the board members shuffled out, broken and defeated. Cara, however, stood rooted to the spot.

Andrew stepped closer, his shadow cutting across hers. “Elaine was planted by you as well, was she not? Sent to drive a wedge between Cathryn and me?”

Cara’s head jerked up, fury flashing. “So your memory loss was a sham?” she spat.

A slow, cold smile touched Andrew’s lips. “It was. How else could I unravel your schemes? How else could I keep a card hidden to strike back?”

Cara’s eyes burned. Through clenched teeth, she hissed, “If not for Kestrel, you wouldn’t have been able to hold onto your position today!”

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He arched an eyebrow, unshaken. “You’re right—Kestrel chose to help me, not you.”

Her fists curled, nails biting into her palms. “Money buys loyalty. Today, Kestrel stands with you; tomorrow, Kestrel may stand with me. We’ll see.”

She spun on her heel, but Andrew’s voice cut through the air behind her. “Ethan, clear out her office. Remove every trace of her from Brooks Group.”

For the first time, Cara faltered. Her eyes glistened. Years of maneuvering, countless nights of calculation, and now she was being cast out. She would not accept this humiliation quietly. She would find Kestrel.

She had once dismissed the whispers of Kestrel’s legend as embellishment. Now, she knew better. Kestrel had the power to bring a company to its knees. Losing today was nothing. Whoever secured Kestrel first would hold the reins of Brooks Group’s future. Andrew might think himself clever, but she would get there before him.

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Back in the CEO's office, Ethan stood straighter than usual, relief clear in his tone. "All data has been restored. The program's hidden bug is gone."

Andrew's eyes narrowed. "Say that again."

"The program Jordyn handed over was an older version—an early draft from Kestrel. What's running in Brooks Group now is Kestrel's latest version. Effectively, we have access to Kestrel's program."

Andrew leaned back slowly, the revelation settling in. "No. We did not seize it. Kestrel gave it to us."

Ethan hesitated, then said softly, "The virus was erased, the hidden bug fixed, the surveillance footage sent directly to your inbox... All signs point to Kestrel. But why did Kestrel help us?"

Andrew's gaze sharpened. "Kestrel must have left traces. Can the IPs be tracked?"

Ethan shook his head, grimacing. "Our hackers tried. Every IP is virtual—nothing but phantoms."

“Then scour the employee activity logs. I want to know which terminal deviated from the norm,” Andrew ordered. He had the feeling that Kestrel was breathing the same air.

“On it.”

Ethan hurried back with the results. “This morning, Vanessa handed Sophie a spreadsheet that looked like nonsense. In under ten minutes, Sophie cleaned it.”

He laid the garbled sheet on Andrew’s desk. The page was chaos—symbols and characters tangled into unreadable static.

Then Ethan placed a second sheet beside it. “And this is Sophie’s cleaned version.”

Andrew studied both, his eyes narrowing. “Send them to our hackers. See how long it takes.”

“They’ve been at it for twenty minutes,” Ethan replied, “and they’re still untangling it.”

Those were world-class hackers—talents Andrew had personally recruited from every corner of the globe. The only one who could surpass them was Kestrel.

“Bring me Sophie’s file,” Andrew instructed.

Ethan slid the résumé across. “Administrative management, Olekgan University. Handles routine office operations here.”

Andrew tapped the file once, decisively. “Bring her to me.”

In the administrative department, the television blared breaking news: Watson Tech and Moore Trading had changed hands overnight.

Outside Watson Tech, Liam stumbled out of the building like a man gutted of pride. Investors lay in wait, their fury unrestrained. Eggs and garbage rained down on him as the crowd screamed their rage.

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Sophie clutched Cathryn's arm with a gasp. "Thank goodness my brother listened to you and dumped his Watson Tech stock early. We would have been ruined."

Cathryn didn't answer. Her gaze was locked on the television, where Liam's defeated face filled the screen. Hatred smoldered in her eyes, sharp enough to burn through the glass.

After marrying into the Watson family, she had been deceived into pouring her savings into Watson Tech, all in the name of supporting the family. The moment her fortune was drained, Liam had cast her aside without hesitation, discarding her like a spent match.

Now, Watson Tech had slipped from Liam's grasp, sold into new hands. It wasn't hers to claim, yet watching it torn from the Watsons felt like justice delivered with a cruel smile.

That was why, when she had witnessed Vanessa slipping a virus into the program, she had hesitated—but only for a heartbeat. Her decision to deliver the program to Andrew revealed her true aim: a strike to destroy both the Watsons and her own kin. With two families collapsing, her vengeance would be complete.

Just now, Bessie had called Sophie in tears of gratitude, saying her wages had arrived and thanking Brooks Group for giving her family stability. If Brooks Group fell, how many lives like Bessie's would unravel?

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Cathryn wanted her enemies broken beyond salvage, but she couldn't bring herself to sacrifice the innocent. That was why she resolved to deliver the final version of her program to Andrew. With it, he could sue Jordyn and Liam and deliver the decisive blow.

But Andrew was no friend of hers. He would never move against the Watsons and Moores just for her private vendetta.

Just then, Ethan stepped into the administrative office, his voice low and steady. "Miss Blake, Mr. Brooks would like to see you."

"Me?" Sophie blinked, pointing to herself in disbelief.

Ethan inclined his head.

A spark of excitement lit Sophie's face as she darted a glance at Cathryn. "Why would he want me?"

Cathryn leaned close and whispered, "Word is Vanessa has been pushed out of the office. Perhaps your chance with him just arrived."

“Oh, stop it.” Sophie gave Cathryn a playful shove, though her cheeks flushed crimson. Her heart thumped wildly, betraying her secret thrill.

Sophie followed Ethan upstairs.

Soon, the CEO’s office unfolded before her like something out of a dream: expansive, sunlit, every detail polished to perfection.

Behind the imposing desk sat Andrew, sleeves rolled to his elbows, his forearms taut with corded muscle. Blue veins traced the ridges like rivers cutting through stone. Power radiated from him—raw, masculine, impossible to ignore.

When Andrew lifted his head, his eyes pinned Sophie in place.

Sophie’s breath caught. Heat flared in her cheeks, and she dropped her gaze, flustered. That look of his—piercing, unyielding—did he actually find her attractive? Her fingers brushed her cheek in disbelief. Could she really be pretty enough to warrant that gaze?

“What else did you study in college, besides business administration?”

His sudden question jolted her.

“Uh... what?” She blinked, completely caught off guard.

Andrew rose slightly, bracing his hands against the desk as though weighing her with his eyes.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 341:

Sophie shifted under the intensity, her voice faltering. “Just administration. That’s my major.”

He circled the desk, each step deliberate, until he stood before her. His voice brooked no refusal. “Look at me.”

Her palms grew damp as her fingers twisted together. Was he really being this forward?

Heart hammering, she lifted her gaze. The world seemed to collapse into the fathomless dark of his eyes. Damn it. He was devastatingly handsome.

Overwhelmed, she dropped her gaze again, heat flooding her throat.

“Did you ever study computer science?” he asked.

“Yes,” she admitted quickly. “It was a compulsory course.”

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Andrew turned and settled back into his chair, his eyes still locked on her. “Come here.”

Her head snapped up, then lowered again beneath the weight of that commanding stare. Her pulse thundered in her chest. That simple command carried authority—and something else, too. A dominance that sent her thoughts spiraling.

Her gaze flicked upward and caught on the long stretch of his legs beneath the desk, the tailored fabric hugging every clean line. Was he... asking her to sit on his lap?

The thought crashed through her mind, sending her heart galloping so wildly it might have leapt straight from her chest. “Mr. Brooks, th-this doesn’t feel right, does it?” she stammered.

Andrew’s eyes sharpened. “I am your boss. Are you ignoring my orders?”

Her gaze darted nervously to the floor. What did he mean by that? Was he hinting at some kind of office romance, cloaked beneath the power of his title?

Her throat went dry. She swallowed hard. “I-I just mean... it feels too fast...”

Andrew leaned back, eyes narrowing. “Fast or not depends on what you are capable of.”

Her nails dug into her palms as sweat prickled her skin. Was he... flirting with her?

“Come here.” His voice cut sharper this time, impatience lacing through it.

Forcing herself forward, Sophie shuffled to his side. She stole a glance at him—broad chest, lean waist, those long, commanding legs stretched beneath the desk.

Her throat tightened again. Sitting on those thighs... it would probably feel safe, secure...

She was still drowning in that dangerous thought when his voice shattered the illusion.

“Write the source code for this webpage.” He tapped a finger against the laptop screen.

Sophie’s eyes shot from his legs to the garish site glaring back at her. She blinked, blank and bewildered. Code? What code? Wasn’t she supposed to be sitting on his lap?

Andrew set the neatly tabulated sheet down with a soft thud, his sharp eyes flicking to Sophie. “Did you organize this spreadsheet?”

“Yes,” Sophie answered with a small nod, hands clasped in front of her.

His attention shifted to the glowing monitor. “And do you know how this webpage was built?”

“It was made using code,” she replied cautiously.

“Can you write code yourself?”

She shook her head quickly. “No.”

Andrew’s gaze lingered on her, heavy and searching, until her shoulders began to tense.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 342:

“Turn around,” he ordered at last.

Confused, Sophie pivoted slowly, trying not to betray her unease.

She could feel his stare on her back like a physical weight. Her posture stiffened; she wanted to appear composed, but nerves locked her muscles rigid.

He stepped closer, his voice dropping. “Did you undergo any special training when you were younger?”

Sophie blinked, dredging up childhood memories. “I took piano lessons... dance classes... and a few art workshops,” she murmured.

Silence stretched between them before Andrew finally said, “You may leave.”

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She turned to go, but as she passed him, a subtle fragrance rose from his skin—clean, crisp, and familiar. She paused, inhaling as she tried to place where she had smelled it before.

“Do you have something else to say?” Andrew’s voice cut through her thoughts, and his eyes flickered with something unreadable. Was Sophie about to reveal her identity?

“N-no... nothing,” Sophie stammered, and hurried from the office, her cheeks burning.

Then Ethan approached Andrew, his hands tucked into his pockets. “If Kestrel does not wish to reveal herself, no amount of questioning will make her, Mr. Brooks.”

Andrew rubbed his temple, a frown shadowing his brow. “She does not seem like Kestrel.”

The silhouette did not match. The eyes did not match. The girl he remembered standing on that balcony had carried an ache too deep to name—sorrow that had settled into her bones. But Sophie’s eyes brimmed with light, untamed and alive.

“Not like her?” Ethan asked slowly. “Have you met Kestrel before?”

Andrew waved him off with a weary hand, unwilling to explain further.

“Your concussion has not healed fully,” Ethan reminded him gently. “You should rest.”

Andrew ignored the advice. “Has Cathryn gone to the new house?”

“Mrs. Brooks is currently staying at Sophie’s place,” Ethan replied.

A sigh escaped Andrew before he could stop it. A quiet, guilty weight pressed against his chest. He had hurt Cathryn’s feelings.

“Have Yosef chauffeur her back tonight,” Andrew ordered.

Meanwhile, Sophie returned to the administrative office, her cheeks glowing crimson.

Cathryn approached and grinned. “Why is your face so red?”

Flustered, Sophie cupped her face with both hands.

“Something happened with Mr. Brooks, didn’t it?” Cathryn teased, her laughter light.

Sophie peeked out between her fingers, her blush deepening. “I don’t understand what he meant. He called me in, made me turn around, and just... looked at me.”

Cathryn clapped a hand over her mouth, suppressing a laugh. “He is bewitched by your beauty.”

“Me? Beautiful?” Sophie touched her cheek, doubtful.

Cathryn nodded firmly. “Without question.”

Sophie’s beauty wasn’t the polished, glamorous kind—it was untamed and fresh, with luminous eyes.

Sophie snatched up a small mirror, peering at her reflection as if it might reveal a secret. “Beautiful enough for Mr. Brooks to fall for me at first sight?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 343:

Cathryn smiled. “Love is never logical. Perhaps fate has already tied you to him.”

“Do you really think it’s possible? Between me and him?”

Cathryn squeezed her hand. “If it’s what you want, I will help you.”

Emotion welled in Sophie’s chest. “Thank you.”

Seeing Andrew today had deepened Sophie’s feelings toward him. She had always admired him from afar, regarding him as a distant star, a moon hung impossibly...

...high—someone to worship, never to touch. Yet when his eyes lingered on her, something inside her shifted. If Cinderella could win her prince, why couldn’t she?

Sophie threw her arms around Kathryn. “I wish I could marry Mr. Brooks.”

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“You will,” Cathryn said, embracing her tightly.

As the day wound down, Cathryn’s phone buzzed with a news alert. The Moore family’s downfall was splashed across the headlines—forced to retreat to a cramped rental on the city’s eastern edge. With both the Watsons and Moores in ruins, reporters dug up every sordid scandal: Jordyn stealing her sister’s husband, Zoe’s promiscuous history, and Richard’s meteoric rise on the back of his first wife’s sacrifices.

Cathryn slipped her phone away and said to Sophie, “You head home first. I have business to handle.”

“Come back soon. I’ll wait for you at home,” Sophie said warmly.

Cathryn had barely stepped out of the Brooks Group building when someone blocked her path.

It was Cara. Her lipstick was smeared, her hair undone, her eyes blazing with spite. “Damien’s amnesia is an act,” she hissed.

Cathryn’s breath caught, pieces of the puzzle snapping into place. “Elaine wasn’t sent by Amanda, was she? You sent Elaine yourself.”

Cara’s lips curled into a mocking sneer. “So you are clever after all.”

Cathryn's eyes turned to ice. "Let me make this clear—you will never come between Damien and me."

Cara leaned in, her voice dripping with malice. "Oh, come on. I already know about the prenuptial agreement. Even if I don't lift a finger, the two of you are doomed to fracture."

A chill rippled through Kathryn, but she held her ground. "What exactly are you after?"

"Simple," Cara said smoothly, her smile razor-sharp. "Work with me."

Cathryn shook her head, her refusal firm and unmistakable. "Erase that thought from your mind."

Cara's laugh was low and poisonous. "How touching—your loyalty to Damien. And how foolish. He is already planning his future with Elaine. His assets notarized, a house purchased—all for her."

The words sliced through Kathryn like a blade. Her chest tightened, every breath jagged and raw. So that was why Damien had faked the amnesia—to push her away without having to say the words...

...himself? He never needed to go to such lengths. If he had simply told her he wanted out, she would have walked away. She had promised she would not cling.

Cara's tone softened, almost coaxing now. "Your sister is an idiot. But you? You are clever and capable. Join me, and you will gain a lot from working with me."

It was a rare compliment from Cara, born of grudging respect. She had seen the fire in Cathryn—potential too dangerous to leave on the opposing side.

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Chapter 344:

Cathryn's lips curved into a slow, cold smile. "Nah. I don't make pacts with evildoers."

With that, she pivoted and walked away.

Cara's nails dug into her palms as she watched Cathryn's retreating figure vanish into the distance. Rage surged through her chest like wildfire, and with a guttural cry, she hurled her purse to the ground, the thud echoing her fury.

Cara snatched up her phone and barked, "Nick, get home this instant. If you drag your feet any longer, every last coin of the Brooks fortune will fall into Andrew's hands."

On the other end, Nick's voice oozed nonchalance. "Then let him have it."

Her vision went red. "And when he does, what shall we live on? How are we meant to survive?"

"We'll work for him. He won't let us scrape by," Nick replied with maddening calm.

Cara's eyes burned with fury. "You want me to live under Andrew's thumb, getting by on his pity? Begging him for crumbs? Where would my pride be then?"

"Pride?" Nick gave a dismissive chuckle. "It's not shameful at all to rely on him. And I'm pretty sure that even if I spend my days gaming, he would never let me starve."

Her whole body shook. “Gaming—always gaming! Is that all you’re good for?” she spat, before slamming the call dead.

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The silence that followed was suffocating. She couldn’t fathom it. Why did Andrew attract allies like moths to a flame, while she—despite all her ploys—stood alone? Even her own son was dead weight.

Her thoughts darkened, drifting to Jaycob—Jorge’s younger brother, whom Jonny had banished from Olekgan with a vow that he could never set foot in the country again.

Cara’s fists clenched. The inheritance was not Andrew’s by right alone. Jaycob had a claim as well.

Meanwhile, Cathryn made her way to the curb to hail a cab, but unease gnawed at her. Cara’s words still clung to her mind like burrs—Damien’s amnesia was an act. But how could it be? Cara had lied, manipulated, and tricked her before. She wouldn’t fall for the same trap twice.

Just then, her phone vibrated with a call from Margaret.

“Mrs. Brooks, you might not know, but Mr. Brooks actually never lost his memory.”

Cathryn froze, her pulse spiking. “What did you just say?”

“I overheard him,” Margaret continued. “He was on the phone with Yosef. He mentioned your name. He remembers everything.”

Cathryn’s breath stuttered. Her fingers clenched so hard around the phone that her knuckles turned white. So Cara had not lied. Damien had not forgotten her at all. He had deceived her—to cast her aside, to rekindle his past with Elaine. Cara had mentioned that he and Elaine were already planning a wedding. And she... she had been a fool, dreaming of forever while he plotted her dismissal.

A car rolled up.

Cathryn wiped the sting from her eyes, slid inside, and muttered, “Eastbrook outskirts.”

Only when the engine hummed to life and the roads didn’t lead to Eastbrook outskirts did she raise her head and notice the driver was Yosef.

“Mrs. Brooks,” Yosef said gently, “Mr. Brooks asked me to bring you home.”

Her gaze bored into him. “His amnesia—it was all a lie, was it not?”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 345:

Yosef faltered, then gave a reluctant nod. “He must have his reasons.”

Cathryn’s laugh was bitter, hollow. Reasons. The same reasons men always had—discarding one woman before moving on to the next.

“Crownspeare Villa is not my home. Take me to the Eastbrook outskirts,” she said, her voice firm now. She had more pressing matters to handle.

Yosef obeyed, dropping her at the shabby rental on the edge of Eastbrook.

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Outside the door, the files the three Moores and Liam had hauled out of the company were piled like a mountain, untouched and unsorted—once the beating heart of an empire, now nothing more than worthless stacks of paper.

The Moores and Liam stood in the chill night, their figures small against the heap.

“Burn them,” Richard said flatly, his voice as cold as stone.

“We’re simply surrendering? Just like this?” Jordyn’s eyes widened.

The flames licked higher, crackling through the white sheets.

“You bitch!” Liam suddenly roared. His palm cracked across her face with brutal force. “Your lies dragged us into ruin!”

Jordyn collapsed, clutching her cheek, hatred blazing in her tear-filled eyes. “If I’m a bitch, then what does that make you? A pathetic loser married to a bitch?”

Liam blinked, stunned by her defiance. “What did you just say?”

“You cheated with your wife’s sister. You’re as rotten as me!” she spat, her eyes burning. She had nothing left—nothing to lose, nothing to fear.

“Damn you, you filthy slut! I will kill you!” Liam lunged, seizing her arms and shoving her toward the flames.

The color drained from Jordyn’s face.

“No! Jordyn!” Zoe shrieked, lurching forward to catch her. “Richard, save her!”

But Richard did not move. He stood at the edge of the firelight, his face carved from stone, hatred etched deeper than the flames themselves. He despised Zoe and Jordyn more bitterly than Liam ever could. Cathryn was not his blood. That was why he had poured his entire heart into Zoe and Jordyn—only to discover that Jordyn, the daughter he had cherished for twenty years, was another man’s child, and that Zoe had cuckolded him all this time.

Worse, the wife he trusted and the daughter he cherished had left him with nothing but ashes. He—once a proud man—had been reduced to a penniless fool at fifty.

Had he realized sooner, he would have treated Cathryn with care. That way, he would have Andrew in his corner, and with that union, he would have held Olekgan in the palm of his hand—power, influence, and control all but assured.

Cathryn stepped out of the car and into the fray. Chaos rippled before her eyes—Liam lunging at Jordyn, Zoe screeching like a cornered bird, and Richard standing off to the side, his face an unreadable mask of ice. For the first time in years, a strange lightness unfurled in her chest.

Her father had always beaten her, cursed her, and crushed her spirit since childhood. Liam had betrayed her without a second thought. None of it had ever been her fault. These people had never known what love meant. Their marriages, their alliances—all built on profit and convenience—were now crumbling as greed turned them against one another.

“Cathryn!” Zoe’s voice cut through the din, a hiss loaded with venom, fury blazing in her eyes.

At the sound of Cathryn’s name, Liam froze, his hands slackening on Jordyn’s arms. He stared at Cathryn as though waking from a dream. “Cathryn...” he murmured, dazed.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 346:

Jordyn stumbled back to Zoe's side, clutching her arm, her glare at Cathryn sharp enough to wound.

What struck Jordyn and Zoe hardest was not Cathryn's presence, but the gleaming Maybach idling just behind her.

They knew that car as intimately as their own reflections. How many times had they laughed at Cathryn, sneering that she was nothing more than a pitiful servant hitching rides in her employer's car? Yet here it was—the truth laid bare. That Maybach belonged to Cathryn. Worse still, she was not only its owner, but the wife of Olekgan's wealthiest man.

Jordyn's eyes brimmed with tears she refused to let fall. She dragged a sleeve across her cheeks and spat, her voice sharp enough to draw blood. "You came here to taunt us?"

“Yes.” Cathryn folded her arms, a slow smile curving her lips—cool, polished, touched with mischief. The candor stole Jordyn’s breath.

Liam’s gaze locked onto Cathryn the moment she appeared, his mind stuttering into silence. She was even lovelier than memory allowed—so radiant he could hardly believe she had once been his wife. And he had divorced her for that tramp Jordyn.

“So what if you’ve latched onto the Brooks family?” Jordyn sneered, bitterness slicing through her tone. “You’ve been divorced once. Do you really think the Brooks family will let someone with that kind of stain sit at their table as Mrs. Brooks? I won’t be surprised when they toss you out like yesterday’s trash.”

Jordyn’s words carried the sting of truth. The Brooks family was old money, its gates guarded by image and reputation. With Andrew’s formidable grandmother still alive—the woman who had shaped him—Cathryn would never pass her scrutiny.

For a fleeting moment, the words cut deep. Cathryn acknowledged that Jordyn might be right. Damien had already walked away without looking back.

But in front of Jordyn, Cathryn refused to show even a hint of weakness. A slow, confident smile curved her lips. She stepped closer to Liam, lowering her voice until it became a silken challenge. “Between me and Jordyn, who would you choose?”

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Liam's eyes flared with sudden light. Cathryn still wanted him—that much was clear. He turned on Jordyn with open contempt. “She forced her way into my bed—you know that. She and her mother spun lies and strung me along... If I could do it again, I would choose you, Cathryn.”

Cathryn lifted one brow, her gaze flicking toward Jordyn with deliberate cruelty.

Jordyn bit down until blood beaded on her lip. She'd known the slap earlier meant Liam was about to cut her loose, but hearing him declare—right in front of her—that Cathryn was his choice stripped her to the bone.

Tears finally broke free, spilling hot down Jordyn's face. “The Watsons are finished. The title of Mrs. Watson means nothing now.”

Cathryn tilted her head, her voice cutting through the night like frost. “You're on the verge of a divorce. By your logic, what family of worth would dare take you now? You aren't as fortunate as I am.”

The barb sank deep. Jordyn collapsed against Zoe's shoulder, her sobs raw and unrestrained.

Richard, however, had fixed on the Maybach. Greed spurred his steps as he hurried toward Cathryn, plastering on a smile. Surely Cathryn had come to take him to the Brooks estate. After all, he was her father.

“Cathryn,” Richard called out warmly.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 347:

Cathryn’s brow twitched, almost imperceptibly. She could not remember him ever saying her name with such tenderness.

“Cathryn, I was blind before. I made mistakes. I mistreated you for years. But your forgiveness—that means the world.” Richard reached for her hand.

She stepped aside, her eyes flashing with revulsion.

His hand fell awkwardly to his side, embarrassment creeping over his features. “Do you remember when your mother and I took you to the amusement park when you were a kid? You rode on my shoulders while the three of us went on the carousel...”

Her eyes turned to ice. “You’re mistaken. That was Jordyn on your shoulders. The three of you. I was never there.”

Richard had never taken her anywhere. Never lifted her high, never placed her in a family photo. On the way here, she had thought about asking him why—why her childhood had been filled with nothing but blows and scorn. But staring at his eager, craven face now, she realized it no longer mattered. She was no longer that little girl begging for crumbs of affection in the servants’ quarters.

“Cathryn, I love you.” Richard clutched his chest as if the words could buy him absolution.

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Her gaze turned glacial. “If you love me, do you also love Jordyn?”

His eyes snapped toward Jordyn and Zoe, huddled together, his face twisting with rage. Right now, they were nothing but the embodiment of his ruin. If Jordyn hadn’t signed that reckless wager agreement with Andrew, Moore Trading wouldn’t have changed hands. Brooks Group had taken everything, and Cathryn...

...was all he had left.

“I was deceived by them!” Richard spat, hatred trembling in his voice. “I despise those two. I wish they were dead!”

Zoe recoiled, clutching Jordyn tighter, horror blanching her face. Years of scheming—undone in a single night.

Cathryn’s expression didn’t change. Calmly, almost ceremoniously, she reached for a long leather whip.

Zoe and Jordyn flinched as though the leather might leap off the pavement and scorch their skin. They knew its sting far too well.

Cathryn extended the whip toward Richard, her voice landing like a blade. “If you truly love me, then prove it. Every lash you once laid on me—return them to the ones who deserved it.”

Without a flicker of doubt, Richard wrapped his fist around the whip’s handle and advanced on Zoe and Jordyn.

“Richard—” Zoe’s voice broke as she tried to shield Jordyn with her arms, inching backward. “I have stood beside you for twenty years. Perhaps I accomplished little, but I was there. I gave up everything.”

Bloodshot eyes locked on her, Richard snarled, “You seduced me while carrying Vince’s child, then buried the truth for twenty years. It ends tonight.”

He lifted the whip, the leather hissing through the air before it cracked with a sound that could freeze blood.

Jordyn’s and Zoe’s screams tore through the silence, jagged and raw.

Cathryn turned away, not a single muscle in her body flinching.

“Cathryn—please,” Liam called after her, his voice raw and pleading. “I am so sorry.”

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Chapter 348:

Cathryn pivoted slowly, her eyes cool and sharp. “And what, exactly, are you sorry for?”

His confession tumbled out in a rush. “I should never have let Jordyn reel me in. I should never have swallowed her lies about knowing Kestrel. And divorcing you—damn, I should never have done that.”

Cathryn held his gaze, unblinking. “Because Jordyn boasted that Kestrel once taught her, you rushed to throw me aside and marry her. And when she feared you might leave her, she claimed she was Kestrel. Tell me, Liam—do you even know who Kestrel really is?”

He faltered, then shook his head. His eyes flickered with sudden hope. “Wait—you know Kestrel?”

She didn’t answer aloud, but the hard gleam in her eyes was enough.

Liam caught her hand, clutching it as though it were a lifeline. “Could you introduce me to Kestrel? Please—do me a favor and make an introduction. With Kestrel’s help, I can rebuild everything and rise again in no time.”

The spark of ambition burned bright in his eyes. Kestrel had helped Andrew, yet had never shown up. That meant Kestrel wasn’t bound to Andrew—at least, not yet. And if Kestrel was still free, he still had a chance.

An icy laugh slipped from Cathryn’s lips as she shook off his hand. “Kestrel will never work with you.”

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The fragile hope in his eyes snapped. His brow furrowed, and his jaw tightened until his teeth ground together. “If you stand in my way,” he growled, “I will not let you off easily!”

A coldness spread through her chest like frost climbing glass. Moments ago, he had begged for forgiveness and reconciliation. But the instant he learned Kestrel would never side with him, his love curdled into threats.

She narrowed her eyes, a faint smile ghosting across her lips. “That is because I am Kestrel.”

The words struck him like a thunderclap. His eyes widened, and for a heartbeat, the air around him vanished. Impossible. It couldn’t be. Cathryn was Kestrel?

Unlikely. Cathryn had never even gone to school. He remembered the day he had handed her a single page to read—how she had stumbled over every line like a child. She couldn't even read a simple paragraph without faltering.

A twisted smile dragged across his lips. "You think you can pretend to be Kestrel, just like Jordyn did? At least Jordyn studied programming in Befbridge. You?"

"You've never set foot in a school—and you dare to pose as an expert? This is beyond pathetic."

Her eyes turned to steel. "I never went to school because, as a child, I was taken by an organization that trained me for six years."

The blood drained from Liam's face. He had heard whispers about that organization—the one that scoured the world for extraordinary minds, accepting only those with IQs over 200. Children endured merciless elimination tests every month. Most didn't last beyond two years. Cathryn had survived six.

"The code Jordyn flaunted?" Her voice was glacially calm. "She stole it from me. But she took the wrong one—the earliest version. The final one is here."

She lifted her phone. Lines of intricate code glowed on the screen like living light.

Liam's hands trembled as he read the code, unable to still the shaking. This was it—the code that could have turned Watson Tech into a titan. The key to the Watson family's glory.

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Chapter 349:

“I spent three years perfecting this while I was with you,” she said, her voice shaking now, not with fear but with rage. “And on the very day I planned to hand it to you, you and Jordyn slept together at the Olekgan Hotel. Then you sent me the video.”

The memory seared through her chest, a brand of humiliation and betrayal she would carry forever. Three years of her youth—wasted—on a man who had made a fool of her.

Liam lunged for her phone, but Cathryn stepped back, her voice cutting through the air. “It’s too late. Andrew already has the code.”

Tears welled in his eyes, hot and desperate. “Cathryn... please, forgive me...”

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Regret consumed him whole. The woman he had despised for three years had been the one who could have saved him. The code he had hunted was with her all along. Half a year ago—one night—he had been that close. If only he had seized it then, Watson Tech might not have crumbled into ruin. The thought made him want to go back in time and strike Jordyn across the face. That woman had destroyed him.

Cathryn’s gaze was glacial. “You were not wrong, Liam. I was. I should never have been with you. We should never have been together from the start.”

He reached for her hand again, pressing it to his chest, desperation dragging his voice into a plea. “Cathryn, I love you. Feel my heartbeat—it races only for you.”

Revulsion rose in her like bile. Her free palm cracked across his face, the sound echoing in the silence. “Stay away from me.”

“Then I will make sure you never feel your heartbeat again.”

The words came from behind them, deep and steady as a death knell.

Before Liam could turn, a fist collided with his jaw, sending his vision spinning into darkness. He staggered, nearly crumpling to the ground. He opened his mouth to curse—but the words died when he looked up. Andrew stood before him, his fist still clenched, his eyes ablaze with fury.

“Mr...” Liam began, but another brutal punch crushed the words in his throat. Blood burst from his lips in a crimson spray, a broken tooth clattering onto the pavement.

“You dare touch my woman?” Andrew growled, his voice low and lethal, as he swept Cathryn into his arms as though shielding her from a storm.

But Cathryn shoved against his chest and slapped him hard across the face. “You are both jerks,” she hissed, fury blazing in her eyes. She wrenched open the car door and climbed inside without a backward glance.

Liam, spitting crimson, forced a laugh through swollen lips. His gaze locked on Andrew, bitter and mocking. “Mr. Brooks, a man like you could have any woman alive. And yet you cling to one I’ve already claimed? How pitiful.”

Andrew’s expression turned to stone. He hauled Liam up by the collar, his voice low and edged with lethal promise. “Cross her path again, and I will make certain you regret it for the rest of your miserable life.”

Andrew's grip tightened around Liam's throat, his thumb pressing hard enough to leave a mark.

A sharp, unsettling crack echoed from Liam's neck, and panic flashed in his eyes. "Mr. Brooks, please—I swear I'll keep my distance from Cathryn. I'll never go near her again!"

With a flick of his wrist, Andrew let go, sending Liam sprawling to the ground like discarded trash. "You won't get the chance to try."

Suddenly, the wail of sirens split the night as a police cruiser skidded to a stop nearby.

Panic set in. Liam, Zoe, and Richard bolted in a frantic scramble, but officers poured out of the vehicle and boxed them in before anyone could escape.

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Chapter 350:

Meanwhile, Yosef was about to start the engine when Cathryn's voice cut through the chaos. "Wait. Let's not leave yet."

She had assumed Damien's plan was simply to take control of Watson Tech and Moore Trading—not to drag their dirty laundry into the open with law enforcement. This new move caught her off guard. Stepping out of the car, Cathryn wanted to witness their downfall for herself.

The police chief's tone left no room for doubt. "You're all under arrest for illegally breaching a corporate network."

Within seconds, Liam found himself cuffed and restrained.

Richard wasted no time trying to save himself, jabbing a finger at the others. "Jordyn signed the deal, and Zoe ordered the virus—don't drag me into this!"

Jordyn shrank back, terror in her eyes. The idea of jail chilled her to the bone; her whole future was at stake.

Pointing at Zoe, Jordyn's voice shook. "She's the one who masterminded all of it. I never wanted any part of this. She forced me to sign that agreement!"

Zoe stared back, dumbfounded. Richard's betrayal was one thing, but her own daughter throwing her under the bus left her speechless, reeling from the shock.

"You brought this on yourself," Jordyn spat, her voice sharp and bitter as she glared at Zoe. "You slept with that nobody, Vince, and let my origins be laughed at. You owe me—so take the blame."

Zoe's tears spilled freely. "Jordyn, I'm your mother. How can you throw me to the wolves like this? You're the one who signed that deal. You should own up to what you did."

A harsh sneer twisted Jordyn's face. "Do you really want to see me in jail? Is that what you want?"

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Desperation crept into Zoe's voice. "So you expect me to take the fall for everything? Am I supposed to rot in prison just so you can walk free?"

Without a trace of warmth, Jordyn brushed away her mother's tears. "Relax, Mom. No matter how long you're locked up, I'll take care of you when you get out. I'll make sure you're not left with nothing."

There was no comfort in her words—only cold calculation.

Zoe struck her own chest, her voice rising in agony. "I married Richard when I was pregnant just to give you a better shot at life. I spent twenty years terrified someone would find out about your birth. I've lied, planned, suffered—all for you. And now you're turning your back on me, your own mother. How can you be so heartless?"

Jordyn's laughter rang out as she dropped the act altogether, her voice sharp as broken glass. "Heartless? Everything I know, I learned from you. I guess you taught me well."

Fresh tears threatened to choke Zoe. She stumbled backward, clutching at her chest. Everything she'd done had been for her daughter—even crossing lines she'd sworn she never would—just to give her a future. And now that same daughter was ready to trade her in for her own freedom.

The chief didn't wait another second. "Get all of them out of here."

Liam trembled so badly he lost control. Richard yelled for someone to believe his innocence. And Jordyn shrieked, "It was all Zoe! She forced me—none of this was my idea!" She'd stopped calling Zoe "Mom" altogether.

Zoe's spirit shattered. She didn't protest or defend herself. She simply let herself be led away in silence.

Watching from the sidelines, Cathryn felt a grim satisfaction as the four tore each other apart. This was only the beginning. They deserved every bit of it, but her vengeance wasn't finished yet. Her mother's blood still cried out for justice, and she vowed she'd get it—no matter how long it took.

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Message from Noa: Thanks for all the support in the last announcements, I really really appreciate it dear ones, have a nice weekend. God loves you and Noa wishes you all the best. ٩(^ڤ^)و´-

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