

Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 351:

Sliding back into the car, Cathryn gave Yosef a single command. “Take me to Sophie’s place.”

The engine hummed as they set off.

Andrew’s headlights loomed in the rearview mirror, tailing them closely. His calls kept lighting up Cathryn’s phone, but she declined every one without hesitation.

Giving up, Andrew rang Yosef instead. “Let me talk to Cathryn. Now.”

Yosef handed over his phone. “Mrs. Brooks, it’s Mr. Brooks.”

Cathryn’s voice was cold. “I’m not speaking to him.”

Andrew said firmly, “Put me on speaker.”

Yosef obliged, setting the phone on the console and turning on speaker. Andrew's words spilled out in a rush. "Cathryn, just hear me out. Whatever you saw with Elaine—it was all an act. I barely know her, I swear."

Staring out the window, Cathryn's jaw tightened. Property notarization, transferring his assets, and a new house in another woman's name—every move had made his intentions painfully clear. Now he was doubling down on lies.

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Andrew tried again, his voice strained with urgency. "Cara is behind all of this. She wants to split us up—can't you see what she's doing?"

Cathryn didn't give him the chance to finish. With a flick of her finger, she ended the call.

Nothing he could say would erase what he'd already done—not after what he had said to her at the hospital.

Following her instructions, Yosef pulled up in front of Sophie's apartment building.

Before Cathryn could take a step, Andrew's car screeched to a halt behind them, tires protesting against the pavement.

Cathryn hurried toward the entrance, but Andrew stepped directly in front of her. “Cathryn, forget everything I said before. None of it was real. I was just trying to get Elaine to slip up.”

Cathryn met his eyes, unblinking. “And what did you expect her to reveal? Was there something you were hoping to catch her saying?”

Andrew faltered, hesitation flickering across his expression. There was no way he could confess what had really happened with Cara at the company. His relationship with Cathryn was still fragile—he couldn’t risk one more crack. His true identity had to stay hidden.

Tears shimmered in Cathryn’s eyes as she drew a shaky breath. “You know, Damien, I’m perfectly capable of walking away from you. You didn’t have to throw Elaine in my face just to hurt me.”

Before she could move past him, he caught her by the waist and leaned down, his lips seeking hers. “Don’t leave me.”

Cathryn shoved him away, her voice low and raw. “Elaine is the one who belongs with you. You two make the perfect match. The fault lies with me. I should never have entered the picture.”

Not looking back, Cathryn ran into the building.

Andrew remained frozen, watching the elevator swallow her up, frustration spilling out as he dragged a hand through his hair.

Upstairs, Cathryn slipped into Sophie's apartment.

Sophie peeked past her, curiosity written all over her face. "Were you being chased just now?"

Still catching her breath, Cathryn pressed a palm to her chest. "No, nothing serious. Just some stray mutt startled me outside. Gave me quite the scare."

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“A dog?” Sophie moved to the window and glanced down at the street.

Her mouth fell open in shock. Down below sat a gleaming luxury car, Andrew leaning against the hood, a cigarette balanced between his fingers. Their eyes met across the distance.

Sophie’s pulse quickened. She pressed her hand to her chest, hardly believing it. So Andrew had really taken a liking to her—he’d tracked her all the way here.

Sophie ran trembling fingers through her hair, smoothed her dress, and peeked out the window once more. There was no mistaking it—Andrew’s eyes were fixed on her.

Andrew lifted his hand in a brief, unmistakable wave. He knew Cathryn was staying under Sophie’s roof, and if things were normal, he might have come up to thank Sophie or ask her to take good care of Cathryn. But with Cathryn refusing to see him, he made do by greeting Sophie from afar.

Feeling her cheeks blaze, Sophie shyly waved back. For a breathless moment, she wondered—had his feelings toward her really run this deeply?

Heart racing, she dashed into her room, changed into her prettiest floral dress, and refreshed her makeup. She even practiced a few radiant smiles in the mirror, rehearsing what she'd say if she bumped into him outside.

When she finally stepped out the door, the street was empty. Andrew was gone.

Disappointment weighed on Sophie's shoulders. If only she hadn't wasted time getting ready—maybe she could have caught Andrew before he left.

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Her footsteps carried her to the spot where Andrew's car had been parked. A handful of cigarette butts littered the ground, and she bent to pick one up, noticing the indent of his teeth on the filter. The simple act of holding it sent a strange happiness pulsing through her. What had been going through his mind as he waited here? Had he been thinking about her?

Flushed and giddy, Sophie clutched the cigarette butt like a precious keepsake and headed upstairs.

The bathroom door swung open, and Cathryn stepped out, toweling her hair dry. She stopped short when she saw Sophie all dressed up. "It's almost midnight. Who are you getting ready for?"

Sophie wiped her lipstick with a shy swipe and blurted, “No one. I just needed to take the trash down, that’s all.”

Cathryn gave her a once-over, eyebrows lifting. “You take out the trash wearing that dress? Full makeup and everything?”

With a small sniff, Sophie lifted her chin. “Style is a way of life. I believe in always looking my best.”

Cathryn grinned and gave her a thumbs-up. “No wonder Andrew can’t keep his eyes off you.”

A blush crept up Sophie’s cheeks, and for once, she didn’t deny it. The memory of Andrew waiting outside had left her absolutely certain—he was interested in her.

Meanwhile, when Andrew returned home, tension bristled the moment he stepped through the front door.

Elaine was sprawled on the couch, her tone cold as she railed at Margaret, who stood nearby, staring at the floor like a scolded schoolgirl.

Andrew’s voice cut through the noise. “What’s all this about?”

Without missing a beat, Elaine rushed over and wrapped herself around his arm.
“Damien, I want Margaret gone. I can’t have her here any longer.”

Ignoring her and pulling his arm free, Andrew crossed the room and focused on Margaret instead. “What happened to your face?”

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That simple question was all it took. Margaret’s composure finally crumbled, and tears welled in her eyes.

Elaine had been criticizing and slapping Margaret for days. Margaret had carried the marks on her face, going about her duties in silence. Now that Andrew had finally noticed the swelling, the pain she had held back came flooding out.

Elaine cut in, her tone dripping with rage. “I told her to throw out the pillows on that bed, but she refused. Instead of tossing them, she tucked them away. Isn’t that outright defiance?” She clung to Andrew, playing the wronged party with practiced ease.

Margaret wiped her cheeks, her voice trembling. “Those were Mrs. Brooks’s pillows. I kept them just in case she ever returned...”

Elaine’s expression turned cold and hard. “Listen up. I’m the lady of the house now. As for her—forget she ever existed. Keeping her things around just brings bad luck.”

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Andrew’s jaw tightened, rage simmering beneath the surface. He delivered his verdict with flat, dangerous calm. “If the pillows are such a problem, then toss out the damn bed as well.”

Elaine’s whole face lit up with satisfaction. Cara had always warned her that Andrew was cunning and difficult, but he seemed so easy to sway.

She spun on the house staff, her voice snapping like a whip. “You heard Mr. Brooks. That bed goes—right now!”

Pressing herself against Andrew's side, Elaine gave a sweet smile. "There's this beautiful mattress I've been wanting. Tomorrow, let's go buy it together."

That was more than Margaret could bear. Her eyes stung with tears as she rushed off to the bathroom, stifling a sob.

Meanwhile, heavy footsteps echoed through the hall as a team of male servants wrestled the master bed out the front door.

Shaking with anger, Margaret wiped her cheeks and pulled out her phone. She dialed Cathryn's number with trembling fingers. "Mrs. Brooks, are you really not coming back?"

Life had been different when Cathryn was in charge—gentle words, laughter in the kitchen, a sense of belonging. Now, with Elaine running the household, Margaret would rather quit than serve her.

For a long moment, Cathryn said nothing. It wasn't that she didn't want to go back. The truth was, she had no place there anymore. Crownspire Villa already had a new mistress.

On the other end, Margaret let out a shaky sigh. "If that's how it is, I understand. But you should know—Mr. Brooks just had your bed tossed out."

Cathryn felt the words like a slap of cold water. How quickly men broke their promises. Damien had begged her to forgive him, then turned around and destroyed the bed they'd once shared.

Margaret pleaded softly, "I don't want to serve Elaine. Please, tell me where you're staying. Let me come look after you instead."

Cathryn shook her head, her voice tinged with bitter humor. "I can't even cover my own expenses, Margaret. There's no way I could pay you."

She had nothing left—no money, no home, no way to hire help.

"I don't care about the money," Margaret insisted. "Just tell me your address. I could drop by, tidy up, and bring you something to eat."

A faint, wry smile crossed Kathryn's lips. "There's barely any space, honestly. I'm crashing in a cramped apartment with a colleague. Two's already a crowd—there isn't much to keep up with."

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Margaret's gasp was audible through the line. Once, Cathryn had ruled a sprawling, three-story mansion with staff at her beck and call. Now she was squeezed into a tiny flat, living like a stranger in her own life.

"Mrs. Brooks, you don't deserve any of this," Margaret whispered, her tears soaking the receiver.

A soft, tired smile touched Cathryn's lips. It wasn't the cramped apartment that stung—it was knowing the man she loved had already moved on.

"Margaret, you have your own family to care for. Don't quit so rashly. Just listen to Elaine, do whatever she asks, and if it comes to anything I used... get rid of it."

Material things could always be replaced. She would never set foot in that place again.

A weary sigh escaped Margaret. “Mrs. Brooks, you always think things through.”

The words carried the weight of her reality—an ill husband, a college-aged son, bills piling up. She needed her job, plain and simple. Cathryn was right. She had to keep her head down and continue to work.

Leaving the bathroom, Margaret resolved to gather what was left of Cathryn’s belongings before Elaine could make a fuss again.

But when she opened the storage closet, she found nothing. Every item she’d carefully tucked away was already gone. Had Elaine thrown it all out?

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Down the hall, in the bedroom, Andrew sat at the edge of the bed, lost in thought as he turned one of Cathryn’s old mugs in his hands.

Elaine swept into the room and said sweetly, “Damien, it’s late. Let’s get some sleep.”

Andrew didn’t even glance at her, his thumb tracing the rim of the mug. “Get out.”

Elaine froze, then swayed her hips as she moved closer. “Come on, Damien. How about we—”

He brushed her hand away, eyes hard. “I never lost my memory. My wife is Cathryn, and she’s the only woman I’ve ever loved.”

Elaine’s breath hitched. His amnesia—it had been an act?

“My grandmother and your grandfather go way back,” Andrew said, his tone cold. “I’m not interested in humiliating your family. But tomorrow, you’re flying back to Marlinton. I never want to see you here again.”

Tears welled in Elaine’s eyes as she bit her lip. She’d thought she’d finally won him over, but it had been a fantasy. “If Cathryn is the one you want, why did you throw away her bed?” she shot back, desperate for something to cling to.

Andrew finally lifted his eyes to meet hers. “Because you slept in that bed.”

Elaine’s complexion went chalk white. So that was it—his disgust ran that deep.

Rising, Andrew squared his shoulders. “I’m going to take a shower. By the time I’m done, I expect you gone.”

Elaine softened her voice, feigning vulnerability. “It’s the middle of the night. I’ll leave in the morning.”

Andrew shot her a cold glance. “Cara’s already out of the picture. If you’re smart, you’ll take the hint.”

It wasn’t just about the bed—he was ready to leave this house, and every memory of it, behind. Tomorrow, he would move out for good.

Andrew closed the bathroom door behind him. Inside, his eyes fell on a nearly empty bottle of rose-scented body wash still perched beside the tub. That had always been Cathryn’s favorite—she adored the smell of roses. Almost everything else of hers had been swept away, but Margaret must have missed this one.

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Andrew had plenty of his own products, but lately, he found himself reaching for this one instead. The lingering rose scent clinging to his skin was almost enough to convince him Cathryn was still nearby.

In the bedroom, Elaine tried frantically to call Cara, but the call never went through—she'd been blocked. With a furious scream, she hurled her phone to the floor. Her grandfather had been right. Cara was full of lies and tricks.

Now, with her support gone, Elaine knew she had to rely on herself. She let her eyes roam over her reflection, a sly grin taking shape as she admired every curve.

She'd always known her figure was a weapon, and she wielded it well. Back in the day, men had thrown money at her feet, desperate for even a dinner in her company. Some had fought bitter, bloody battles for the privilege of calling her theirs.

Andrew liked to think of himself as untouchable, the king of his world. But in the end, he was still just a man. And men always fell, sooner or later, for a woman who knew how to use her beauty.

Inside the bedroom, Elaine changed into a delicate, see-through lace ensemble. She smoothed shimmering body oil over her skin until it gleamed like polished porcelain, then posed before the mirror, savoring the curves she knew could make any man's heartbeat quicken.

A satisfied smile tugged at her lips. She had already moved into Andrew's residence—why on earth would she leave now? As long as she stayed rooted here, Cathryn wouldn't dare return.

Steam curled from the bathroom as Andrew stepped out of the shower, a towel hanging low on his hips. Just as he reached for his shirt, a sudden, frantic knock rattled the door.

"Damien... help," Elaine gasped, her voice trembling through the door. "My chest—it hurts... I can't breathe..."

Andrew's brow furrowed in alarm. Through the frosted glass, her shadow slumped, sliding toward the floor as if she were collapsing.

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Without hesitation, he yanked the door open.

Elaine stumbled forward, crashing into his chest. "It hurts... right here," she whimpered, clutching his hand and pressing it to her chest. "Please... rub it for me."

Her breathing came soft and shallow, her body pressing deliberately against him—but Andrew’s patience snapped. He gripped her wrist, tore her hand away, and shoved her back.

“Elaine, I’ve had enough,” he bit out. “Your little seduction tricks? They won’t work on me.” Every gesture, every pout, was a cheap echo of what he had once shared with Cathryn.

Tears welled in Elaine’s eyes as she stared up at him. “What’s so good about Cathryn? She’s a divorced woman who spent three years in another man’s bed. You could have anyone—why stoop so low for a broken slut?”

His gaze darkened to something deadly. “Watch your damn mouth!” he warned, his tone sharp with unspoken threat. “Every filthy word you spit about her is a slap at my woman. Keep talking, and you’ll regret it.”

Her voice trembled as she pushed on. “I’m not like her...”

His lip curled in contempt. “That’s right. You’re nothing like Cathryn. She’s pure and innocent. You? Just touching you makes me want to wash my hands.”

With a sudden shove, he flung her aside. Elaine crashed to the floor as humiliation burned through her tears.

“Margaret,” Andrew called out, his tone clipped and cold.

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Margaret hurried over, only to halt mid-step, her hand flying to her mouth at the sight—Elaine sprawled on the floor, dressed in nothing but sheer, revealing lingerie.

“Miss Hathaway says her chest hurts,” Andrew said coolly, detached. “Have Yosef and a few male servants take her to the hospital.”

“Understood.” Margaret spun on her heel and went to fetch the staff.

“No!” Elaine clutched her chest with both hands, shaking her head in frantic denial. “I’m fine now. I don’t need a hospital.”

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The thought of being paraded half-naked before the male servants sent a shiver of dread down her spine.

Andrew regarded her from above, his voice laced with mock concern. “A hospital visit is necessary. If you keel over in my house, how am I supposed to explain that to my grandmother?”

Soon enough, Yosef and several male servants appeared in the doorway.

With her skin greased and glistening, Elaine struggled to rise, every movement turning into a spectacle of shame. Her feet slipped out from under her, sending her down again and again in graceless, tangled heaps. Each fall tugged her lingerie askew, baring flashes of her chest or the delicate curve of her thighs.

None of the men dared move. They stood rooted to the spot, jaws tight, eyes flicking away in stiff discomfort as she floundered like a broken doll.

This was not how Elaine’s plan was supposed to unfold. That lace had been chosen for Andrew alone, meant to tempt and allure—not to make her a spectacle before the

servants. Every slip stripped another layer of her dignity until shame crushed the air from her lungs.

At last, she stopped struggling. She curled in on herself, arms clamped across her chest in a desperate attempt at modesty—only for the motion to expose yet another patch of bare skin.

With a choked sob, she buried her face in her hands and wept, tears sliding down her oiled cheeks. She had never felt so utterly disgraced.

Andrew's gaze cut toward the frozen men, his voice sharp and unyielding. "What the hell are you waiting for? Take her to the hospital."

One servant shifted uneasily, eyes fixed on the floor. "Maybe Miss Hathaway should change first..." he muttered.

Andrew's reply came out with an edge that split the tension in the room. "Just send her to the hospital already. If she drops dead from cardiac arrest while you stand around gawking, how will you explain that to her grandfather?"

The reprimand jolted the male servants into motion. They scrambled forward, hesitant but obedient.

A young servant grimaced as his palms met her slick skin. "Miss Hathaway, did you rub oil all over yourself? You're... sticky as glue."

“Don’t touch me! Stay away!” Elaine kicked wildly, her voice breaking with panic.

Andrew’s command cracked across the room. “She can’t move on her own. Pick her up and take her out.”

Five male servants moved in with awkward precision—four gripping her limbs, one steadying her head—hauling her trembling body off the slick floor tainted by the body oil she had applied.

“She’ll stay overnight for observation,” Andrew ordered icily. “No discharge until the doctors say so.”

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“Understood.” Their chorus echoed through the hall.

Tears streamed down Elaine’s cheeks. “Please... at least let me change first...” The thought of being seen like this was unbearable.

“Miss Hathaway, your life matters more than image,” Margaret said gently, brushing a hand over Elaine’s shoulder. “Don’t fight it. Let’s get you to the car.”

Yosef drove in silence, the glow of the dashboard highlighting his knuckles as he steered through the evening traffic, carrying Elaine toward the hospital.

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Across town, in a cramped rented apartment, Sophie and Cathryn shared a narrow bed.

“Cathryn, what kind of gift truly expresses your feelings toward a man?” Sophie asked, rolling onto her side until their faces were nearly inches apart.

But Cathryn lay staring at the ceiling, lost in the ache of Damien discarding her old belongings. She didn't respond.

Sophie tried again, tilting her head. "What about a tie?"

"A tie?" Cathryn's voice came out flat.

Sophie brightened. "Mr. Brooks is a man of stature. I can't afford anything extravagant, but a good tie—I can manage that."

Cathryn's brow tightened. Even the word "tie" felt like a bruise. The only present she had ever given Damien was a tie, and later that same silk had been twisted into a memory she couldn't bear—desire braided with humiliation.

Afterward, whenever he dressed for business, he reached for that same tie, but Cathryn always stopped him. That strip of fabric carried a weight she couldn't face. In the end, he had hung it in the wardrobe, where it dangled like a silent accusation he looked at each day.

Sophie nudged Cathryn's arm. "So, should I buy a tie?"

"No." The answer came sharper than Cathryn intended.

Sophie blinked. “Why not?”

“It’s just... not a good idea. Pick something else.” Cathryn kept her tone deliberately vague.

Sophie exhaled and flopped onto her back, staring at the ceiling. Then her eyes lit up. “Perfume—rose-scented perfume!”

She remembered catching a trace of floral fragrance clinging to Andrew, something like wild roses carried on the wind.

Cathryn’s brows drew together. “Do men even wear perfume?”

“Maybe if I buy it, he will start,” Sophie whispered, almost to herself.

A laugh slipped from Cathryn. “It sounds as though you’re already in a relationship with Mr. Brooks.”

Darkness mercifully hid Sophie’s blush. “We both have a crush on each other, but neither of us dares to say it,” she admitted shyly.

“There is only a thin curtain between you,” Cathryn said. “Once you draw it aside, everything becomes clear.”

Sophie laced her fingers with Cathryn’s, her grip tense. “I feel a little scared. Being with someone like Mr. Brooks must be overwhelming.”

“Do not overthink it,” Cathryn reassured her gently. “When the time is right, everything will unfold as it should.”

Sophie nodded, though a dreamy look crossed her face. “How can someone as perfect as Mr. Brooks even exist?”

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“I hope he treats you well,” Cathryn murmured. “And that he never strays.”

Sophie sat up and turned to Cathryn, her expression solemn. “Mr. Brooks is not like other men.”

Cathryn only smiled faintly. She knew how blind and irrational women in love could become, and there was no use arguing.

Sophie flopped back down and rested her chin on her hands. “How did you meet your husband?”

Cathryn stared at the peeling ceiling paint as if it held the answer. “By chance,” she said quietly. “We met unexpectedly... and somehow ended up married.”

“A whirlwind marriage?” Sophie asked.

“You could call it that,” Cathryn said.

“I remember you mentioned he cheated on you,” Sophie said carefully.

Cathryn nodded. “He has already brought the other woman home.”

“What a scoundrel,” Sophie burst out, bolting upright. “Divorce him. Leave him.”

“It is not so simple,” Cathryn replied, her tone cool. “We signed a prenuptial agreement. When the year ends, the divorce will come on its own. I am only waiting for the clock to run down.”

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Sophie’s eyes softened with pity. “That feels so unfair to you.”

Cathryn gave a light, almost careless laugh. “I had my reasons for agreeing to it. I cannot call it unfair.”

Unable to hold back, Sophie wrapped her arms around Cathryn. “You have endured so much, Cathryn. And you are only twenty-two.”

Cathryn returned a faint smile but said nothing. Sophie could not begin to imagine the weight she carried—

...the hunger for justice that still gnawed at her heart, the unanswered grief of her mother's death. Though the Moore and Watson families had already crumbled, her battle was far from over.

"Hmm?" Sophie tilted her head, nudging against Cathryn's shoulder and inhaling.

Cathryn squirmed. "Stop that. It tickles." She pushed Sophie's head away with mock annoyance.

But Sophie frowned, perplexed. There was something oddly familiar about the fragrance clinging to Cathryn. She leaned closer, inhaling again. "Wait—are you wearing perfume?"

Cathryn sniffed at her own collar, then shook her head. "Probably just the body wash. I grabbed it at the supermarket."

Sophie laughed, relieved, though a flicker of unease lingered. For a moment, she had thought Cathryn knew Andrew.

"What is it?" Cathryn asked, catching the shadow that crossed her friend's face.

"Nothing," Sophie said quickly, shaking her head. "Come with me tomorrow. We'll buy perfume together."

Cathryn let out a soft laugh. “For the sake of your love life, I suppose I must tag along.”

The following afternoon, Cathryn accompanied Sophie to the mall on a perfume run.

Hours of wandering past glittering displays and endless rows of glass bottles left them both weary, so they sank onto a bench to catch their breath.

Sophie absently pulled out her phone, and a sharp gasp escaped her. “Oh, look at this!” She held the screen closer.

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A news article blared: Last night, a woman clad in provocative lingerie was rushed to the hospital after a sudden medical emergency.

Sophie gave a small snort of disdain. “What a scandal. Dressed like that—she must have gone a bit too far entertaining her husband.”

Cathryn leaned in for a casual glance, but the image on the screen turned her blood to ice. A woman in a lace slip was being carried into the emergency room, her face blurred yet offering no real protection from humiliation.

What stole Cathryn’s breath, however, were the men clustered around her. She knew them—every single one. They were Damien’s servants.

And the woman they were carrying was Elaine.

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Sophie clicked her tongue and shook her head.

...utterly oblivious to Cathryn's turmoil. "She must have gone wild to land herself with a heart attack."

Cathryn's grip tightened around her handbag until her knuckles whitened. She could barely sit still, her body trembling with a storm she refused to show.

She had always known Elaine had been with Damien—but knowing it was one thing. Seeing it, undeniable and splashed across headlines for the world to gawk at, tore open a different kind of wound.

Cathryn's face turned pale. Damien and Elaine must have been so reckless that their passion had landed Elaine in the hospital.

Clearly, they hadn't stepped outside their bedroom for days.

Sophie noticed Cathryn's wan complexion, concern softening her features. "Are you alright?"

Cathryn's voice came faint and strained. "I'm not feeling well. You go ahead and take your time shopping—I'll head home first."

"I'll come with you."

Cathryn shook her head gently. “No need. Some fresh air will do me good.”

Sophie hesitated, then relented. “Alright then. I’ll finish up and come home soon.”

Cathryn slipped away and hailed a cab. As the car passed Crownspire Villa, something tugged at her heart. She leaned forward. “Stop here.”

She stepped out as if drawn by invisible strings and drifted toward the gates.

The residence stood unnervingly still. Her chest tightened with unease. What if she ran into Damien here?

Yet when she peered inside, the place was deserted. No bustle of servants, no footsteps echoing down the corridors—only silence, unsettling in the light of day.

“Looking for someone?” the cab driver called out, noticing her pause. “That rich family moved out.”

Cathryn’s head snapped back. “Moved? When?”

“This morning,” the driver replied casually.

“Any idea where?”

The driver shook his head. “No idea. Only heard the original owner of this place is Mr. Brooks. People say he bought a new place to live with his woman. They moved there today.”

A new home. With his woman.

Cathryn’s heart crashed like glass against stone. So Damien truly intended to marry Elaine. The last ember of hope inside her flickered out. What was she still clinging to? The next time their paths crossed would likely be in a courthouse, signing divorce papers.

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Cathryn turned back toward the house, her gaze catching on a discarded bed tossed carelessly in the yard—the bed she had once shared with Damien, now cast...

...out among scraps and broken furniture. Their love, once radiant and warm, now lay reduced to refuse.

Cathryn's throat tightened as she turned to leave—only to find her path blocked.

"You have some nerve showing up here."

Elaine stood before her, eyes blazing.

Cathryn's expression remained cool. "What do you want now?" She had already moved out. Damien's heart belonged to Elaine now.

"Divorce Damien," Elaine snapped.

Cathryn held her gaze. “Divorce requires two people. Let him come ask me.”

“Call him now. Tell him you want it.”

Suspicion flickered in Cathryn’s eyes. If Damien and Elaine were truly planning marriage, why was Elaine so frantic? What fear was gnawing at her?

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Cathryn’s lips curved in a faint smile. “Why so agitated? You almost look... afraid.”

Elaine’s face twisted. “Damien and I are solid. I’m not afraid.”

Elaine whipped out her phone, shoving a video into Cathryn’s view. Onscreen, Elaine—draped in the same white lace lingerie she had been rushed to the hospital in—threw herself into Damien’s arms as he stepped from the shower, droplets sliding down his sculpted chest.

Elaine’s smile dripped venom. “He can’t get enough of me. He said my chest is fuller than yours, my waist slimmer, my hips rounder—”

“Enough!” Cathryn clapped her hands over her ears, but it was useless. Her mind betrayed her, flickering between her own fevered nights with Damien and the lurid image of him devouring Elaine with that same hunger. The thought curdled her stomach.

So that was Damien’s taste—ample curves over delicate beauty. Elaine was not as beautiful as she was, but in the ways that mattered to Damien, Elaine outshone her.

Elaine’s features hardened with triumph. “I was chosen by Amanda. I’m the one meant to marry Damien. Keep hanging on, and when Amanda returns, you will pay the price.”

She brandished Amanda’s name like a weapon.

Cathryn’s chest went hollow. In that instant, she felt like a thief—an interloper who had stolen what was never meant to be hers.

“Better worry about Amanda seeing those hospital photos of you parading around in lingerie,” Cathryn shot back.

The society columns might not have named Elaine, but Cathryn had recognized her. Rushed to the ER at midnight dressed like that—it could not have been more scandalous. And in wealthy families, reputation was everything.

Elaine’s face burned crimson, her teeth grinding. “Damien and I couldn’t keep our hands off each other last night. You’re just jealous.”

Cathryn's fists curled at her sides. She knew too well the ferocity of Damien's desire, how insatiable he could be. Her voice dropped low, edged with steel. "Show me some respect, and perhaps I will consider divorcing Damien. But keep pressing me, and I will drag this out until both of you are in shreds."

"You—" Elaine stomped her heel into the ground, trembling with fury.

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