

ONCE THE FOOLISH WIFE, NOW HIS ETERNAL OBSESSION

Chapter 4:

Andrew's eyes fell on Cathryn's scrawled signature, and a flicker of mild distaste crossed his face.

"I want nobody to know about our relationship," Andrew said, his tone cold and blunt.

"Got it. A secret marriage," Cathryn replied at once. She was just as eager to keep it hidden. After all, the lifespan of this marriage was only a year.

Andrew lifted his gaze. "Any questions?"

"Where am I supposed to stay?" she asked, meeting his stare.

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Andrew raised an eyebrow. Bold of her—already planning to stay the night. "Gavin," he called.

A man with graying hair, likely in his fifties, stepped out of the shadows. The butler who managed the house—Gavin Miller.

Andrew pointed at Cathryn. "She will be the mistress of this residence starting today."

“Of course, Mr. Brooks. This way, ma’am,” Gavin said, treating Cathryn with practiced courtesy.

Unease curled in Cathryn’s stomach. She couldn’t shake the feeling she was stepping into a place meant for someone else. This man had seemed prepared to marry another woman. Still, things had gone too far to turn back now—and her mother’s death demanded revenge.

“Do you find this room to your liking, ma’am?” Gavin asked as he pushed a door open.

The bedroom was extravagant, its walls adorned with paintings. It looked less like a room and more like a private museum.

A genuine smile tugged at Cathryn’s lips. “It’s hard to believe these aren’t the real thing. Mr. Brooks must have gone all out to put this collection together.”

Gavin’s mouth twitched, almost imperceptibly. For Andrew to hang knockoffs? The idea was absurd. Every painting in this room was an original, and any single canvas could buy a small island. Still, he held his tongue. Decades of loyalty had taught him that silence and discretion were sometimes the highest duty.

A thought struck Cathryn. “What exactly is Mr. Brooks’s name?”

“Wouldn’t it be better to ask him directly?” Gavin replied, his smile measured.

Cathryn lifted her brows. Tight-lipped indeed.

Gavin gave her a nod and slipped quietly from the room.

Left alone, Cathryn's gaze landed on a laptop resting on the desk. She powered it on and immediately began searching for information about the Brooks family.

The articles painted the patriarch, Jonny Brooks, as a former soldier who had gone on to build a business empire. He had fathered two sons.

The elder, Jorge Brooks, had collapsed years ago from a brain hemorrhage and now lay in Olekgan Hospital, trapped in a vegetative state.

The younger, Jaycob Brooks, had rebelled against his father long ago and been exiled—barred from ever setting foot in the country again.

Jorge had children of his own. His first son, Andrew Brooks, born to his first wife, now led Brooks Group as its CEO.

Whispers claimed Andrew had been in a brutal car crash overseas, leaving his face scarred beyond recognition and his body crippled. Jorge's second son, Nick Brooks, was still in his teens—the child of Jorge's second wife—studying abroad.

Scrolling through headlines and rumors, Cathryn pieced together the Brooks family dynamics, each detail sharpening the picture. If Andrew had truly been scarred and left crippled, then the man she was about to marry couldn't possibly be him. And Nick was only sixteen—he couldn't be it, either.

So only two explanations made sense. Either her soon-to-be husband was some relative lingering on the edge of the Brooks family tree, or he was Jorge's hidden child.

Cathryn leaned back in the chair, pleased with her deduction. Someone like her future husband—important enough to open doors, yet not significant enough to draw the world's attention—suited her just fine.

Today felt like a lifetime crammed into a handful of hours. The moment her head touched the pillow, sleep dragged her under.

In her dreams, her mother returned—face streaked with blood, eyes wide open, unable to rest in peace.

Cathryn woke to find her pillow damp beneath her cheek. She grabbed her phone and saw dozens of missed calls—all from Liam and Jordyn.

Another call came through immediately.

Jordyn's screech filled her ear. "Cathryn, you can't keep avoiding the divorce! Liam doesn't love you. He belongs to me, heart and soul. You clinging to the title of Mrs. Watson means nothing."

Then Liam's voice cut in, harsh and impatient. "Cathryn, listen up. Jordyn and I are outside the courthouse right now. Get your butt over here and end our marriage at once!"

Divorcing Liam? Kathryn wanted nothing more. Severing ties with him would free her—and clear the path to marrying into the Brooks family. Still, she

hadn't expected him to be this frantic, rushing toward Jordyn as though time itself might slip through his fingers.

Just then, a firm knock echoed at her door. Cathryn opened it to find Gavin, a white dress draped neatly over his arm.

"Mr. Brooks instructed me to deliver this to you, ma'am," he said.

Cathryn lowered her gaze and accepted the dress. "Please convey my gratitude to Mr. Brooks."

Yesterday's dress had been stained with blood. There was no chance she would ever put it on again. For someone of her future spouse's stature, his attention to detail was surprising. If they could endure the year as polite strangers, perhaps living with him wouldn't feel so suffocating.

The new dress slipped over her skin and settled perfectly, hugging her figure as if it had been sewn with her alone in mind. A quick turn in the mirror confirmed it—the fit was flawless.

There was no time to linger. Cathryn hurried out and flagged down the first taxi she saw, determined to reach the courthouse as quickly as possible.

Outside, Liam and Jordyn paced restlessly, scanning the crowd, nervous Cathryn might not show. When the cab pulled up to the curb, Cathryn stepped out. The white dress fluttered around her legs, light as air.

Her face was faintly pale, which only made her gaze seem sharper—eyes that looked as though they could cut straight through a person. They shimmered

with a delicate glow, like a blossom after rainfall, stirring an unexpected urge to shield her.

For the first time, Liam truly looked at Cathryn. Three years had passed with barely a second glance in her direction. Jordyn had held his attention and filled his thoughts from the first day he married Cathryn.

But now, standing before her, Liam was struck by her beauty. It was a fragile kind of beauty—pure and broken—something Jordyn could never possess.

A wave of remorse crept through him. Cathryn was his wife. There was nothing wrong with him claiming her. If Jordyn hadn't demanded so much of him, leaving him with no energy for another woman, perhaps he wouldn't have gone three years without consummating his marriage with Cathryn.

"Liam, I've already gotten in touch with Kestrel," Jordyn said, catching the shift in his eyes. She clung to his arm at once, staking her claim.

That snapped Liam out of his thoughts.

At the mention of Kestrel, his expression shifted, his lips curling into a pleased smile. In an instant, Cathryn's beauty faded into the background. Looks were fleeting—connections were everything.

Only Jordyn could give Watson Tech the boost it so desperately needed. Kicking Cathryn out and bringing Jordyn in... nothing could serve him better.