

Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 61:

Normally, auction profits came with punishing tax rates. But if the money was routed through a “charity,” the bill all but vanished. It was a flawless con. Anyone else might have missed it—Andrew didn’t.

Douglas had laundered a fortune this way, but this time he’d made the mistake of crossing Andrew’s woman. That meant his lucky streak was about to end.

“Make the arrangements,” Andrew ordered, his tone cold and final.

Cathryn descended the stairs, the painting cradled carefully in her arms.

Off to the side, Jordyn and Vanessa stood stiffly, their faces dark with fury. The painting Andrew had fought for had somehow ended up in Cathryn’s hands. No one could quite figure out what was going on between her and him.

Vanessa’s runner hurried back with an update. “Turns out Cathryn got in after Gavin Miller had a word with the security guard.”

Vanessa frowned. “And who exactly is that supposed to be?”

A mocking smile curved Jordyn’s lips. “Cathryn’s husband—the one who drives cars for some rich family.”

But the runner quickly corrected her. “That’s not what people are saying. Rumor has it Gavin Miller is actually the Brooks family’s butler.”

Jordyn’s eyes narrowed, the truth snapping into place like a puzzle piece. No wonder that old man flaunted luxury cars—none of them were his. He drove the cars owned by the Brookses. Of course. Only the Brooks family would treat a globally limited Maybach like an everyday ride. He’d clearly dropped their name to get Cathryn through security.

At the last step of the staircase, Cathryn’s breath hitched, the thrill in her chest faltering. She’d missed her chance to properly meet Andrew.

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Spinning around, she nearly collided with Ethan as he descended, his crisp suit catching the light.

“Sorry,” she said quickly, steadying herself. Then her voice tightened. “Could you let me go back up to see Mr. Brooks?”

Ethan’s pleasant smile didn’t waver. “I’m afraid not,” he said with a gentle shake of his head. “Unless Mr. Brooks personally invites you, no one goes back up.”

A sharp sigh escaped Cathryn, frustration tightening her chest. Her earlier thrill had blinded her to the real chance she’d just missed. “Could I at least have his number?” she pressed.

“Apologies, but I can’t give you that,” Ethan answered with practiced ease. “It wouldn’t be appropriate.”

An embarrassed smile flickered over her lips as she smoothed her hair back. She’d pushed too far. A man like Andrew would never let his number be handed out so casually.

Nearby, Jordyn caught the exchange and let out a slow, amused chuckle. “So Cathryn doesn’t even know Andrew? And I thought she’d actually managed to claw her way into his good graces.” It seemed Andrew didn’t know Cathryn at all—and certainly wouldn’t offer her his number.

Vanessa’s frown deepened, disbelief threading through her voice. “If they’re strangers, then why was she allowed to walk out with the painting he bought?”

Jordyn’s lips twisted into a malicious grin. “Guess I underestimated that driver husband of hers. Turns out he’s not just a driver—he’s the Brooks family’s butler. He must’ve gotten down on his knees and begged for her. That’s the only way she got that painting.”

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In families as powerful as the Brooks dynasty, even a butler’s word could tip the scales.

Vanessa gave a disdainful sniff, folding her arms. “Still just staff. A servant stays a servant.”

Jordyn's eyes gleamed with smug delight as she nodded, satisfaction practically radiating off her. She was Mrs. Watson now, poised to ride even higher once Watson Tech hit the stock market.

Cathryn—the once-proud Moore heiress—had sunk so low that she was married to a butler, barely above the servants she'd once looked down on. It was a crushing humiliation, and Jordyn swore she'd keep Kathryn pinned beneath her heel.

Jordyn sauntered up, arms folded, a sly smile tugging at her lips. “Face it, Kathryn. Mr. Brooks only played nice because your husband begged for you. And you still think you could latch onto Mr. Brooks?”

Vanessa tossed her hair with a derisive laugh. “Even my grandfather can't get Mr. Brooks's number. And you—a butler's wife, a complete nobody—daring to ask for it? People would die laughing.”

The insults—butler's wife, nobody—sliced through Kathryn like glass. Still, her spine stiffened, and her gaze flashed with a cold, defiant spark.

“I may not sit high on the ladder,” she countered. “But at least I'm not vile enough to line my pockets with dirty money.”

Vanessa went rigid, fingers curling into fists. “Who are you calling vile? Who's out there making dirty money?”

A cutting smile tugged at Cathryn's lips. "Douglas loves to boast that his auctions are charitable. But tell me—whose accounts actually receive those millions?"

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Vanessa's face drained of color. Her throat bobbed as she swallowed hard. "Who fed you that wild story?"

Cathryn turned slowly, her gaze glacial as it pinned Jordyn like a spotlight.

Vanessa shot Jordyn a look sharp enough to draw blood. "Why did you go blabbing to Cathryn?"

Jordyn shook her head quickly, palms raised in a show of innocence. "Don't let Cathryn get in your head. I never said such a thing."

It was a lie, and Jordyn knew it—but there was no chance she would admit it now. Besides, Cathryn had nothing concrete.

Vanessa clenched her jaw and turned on Cathryn. "You're making things up. Do you have evidence?"

Cathryn's voice stayed cool, flat. "I've already reported it to the Olekgan Chamber of Commerce. They're going to look into everything."

Vanessa let out a sharp laugh. "Go ahead and get your hopes up. You're in for a disappointment."

Cathryn soon understood why that laugh carried such contempt.

The auction had wrapped, and Andrew had secured nearly half the lots. Cathryn felt a surprising wave of relief. Better in his hands than in anyone else's.

Just then, Douglas stepped onto the stage, his white hair neatly combed, his cane tapping lightly as he took his place at the podium. "I want to thank everyone for supporting the Brightlight Charity Foundation, and for standing with me as the president of the Olekgan Chamber of Commerce. Every single cent from tonight is going to the children's homes in Olekgan. None of it is going into my own pockets."

Applause thundered through the hall.

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Chapter 63:

“Mr. Grant’s the real deal.”

“He always gives back.”

“The Grant family’s donated for years, never counting the cost. They’ve never cared about money.”

“Olekgan’s lucky to have Douglas leading the Chamber of Commerce.”

Cathryn’s eyes widened as the truth clicked into place. Douglas was the president of the Olekgan Chamber of Commerce. No wonder Vanessa carried herself like she couldn’t be touched.

Douglas lifted a hand, waving off the praise. “You give me too much credit. Everything the Grant family does, we do for my granddaughter, Vanessa. We’re only hoping our good deeds bring her fortune.”

A new round of admiration swept through the room.

“A family that gives without seeking fame—such humility is an example to us all.”

“Miss Grant takes after her grandfather, doesn’t she? She’s gracious, elegant—everything a proper lady should be.”

“Anyone who marries her will bring honor to his family for generations.”

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Pride lit up Vanessa’s face as she stole a hopeful glance toward the private rooms on the upper floor. Andrew was there. With luck, he’d heard every compliment. Maybe he’d finally start to see her that way.

Few in Olekgan’s high society could be a match for Andrew. Still, Vanessa believed her chances were better than anyone else’s.

Then she turned to Cathryn. Her smile vanished, replaced by a look as cold as ice. “You really think you can shake us? My grandfather calls the shots at the Olekgan Chamber of Commerce, and the police chief owes him everything. Go ahead and file your reports. The Grant family doesn’t answer to anyone.”

The light drained from Cathryn’s eyes. She realized how foolish it had been to believe the truth alone could topple the Grants. With the authorities at their beck and call, the Grant family was untouchable. Taking down the Watsons and the Moores wouldn’t be a walk in the park either.

Cathryn’s grip tightened around the Midnight Lilies. If only she had Andrew’s support. With him, the tables could turn for good.

Vanessa’s gaze drifted upward, her lips curling into a satisfied smile. “When Andrew and I get married, nothing will make me happier. The Brooks and Grant families together—it’s a perfect match.”

Jealousy flashed across Jordyn’s face. For years, Vanessa had trailed behind her, desperate for scraps of approval. Now, was Vanessa really about to leap ahead by marrying into the Brooks family?

But Jordyn quickly reminded herself: she was already Mrs. Watson. As soon as Watson Tech went public, everyone in town would be watching her with envy.

Vanessa’s eyes locked onto the painting in Cathryn’s arms, and her voice sliced through the air. “Give me that painting.”

How had Cathryn ended up with the very piece Andrew had bid on? Refusing to surrender it, Cathryn hugged the artwork closer.

Without warning, Jordyn lunged. She yanked Cathryn's hair, then delivered a sharp slap across her cheek. Vanessa wasted no time, swooping in to snatch the painting away.

Pressing the canvas to her chest, Vanessa ran her fingers over the paint and tossed Cathryn a mocking smirk. "You really think you're worthy to hold something..."

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“Andrew touched?”

With a hard shove, Cathryn knocked Jordyn aside and lunged for Vanessa, wrenching the painting from her grasp. “This is theft, plain and simple!” she shouted.

Vanessa let out a sharp whistle. Guards rushed in at once, clamping down on Cathryn’s arms.

Vanessa lifted her chin, her grin dripping with satisfaction. “My grandfather changed his mind. The painting’s off the table. It’s staying with us.”

Fury twisted Cathryn’s features as she fought their grip. “Does the Grant family have any respect for fairness at all?”

From the stage, a deep voice cut cleanly through the noise. Douglas stepped down, every movement measured. “And who said we don’t?”

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Cathryn locked eyes with him, her voice steady. “Mr. Grant, that piece was already auctioned off. Isn’t it beneath your family to snatch it back now?”

Douglas was past seventy, his hair white as fresh snow, his face carved by years and power. His stern expression seemed to drop the temperature in the room.

Vanessa rushed to him, stamping her foot like a spoiled child. “Grandpa, I need this painting!”

He stroked her hair, a flicker of amusement in his eyes. “Since when did art ever matter to you, hmm?”

Jordyn cut in smoothly, “It was Andrew Brooks who bought it. Cathryn only got her hands on it because her husband works for the Brooks family and begged Mr. Brooks for it. Mr. Brooks doesn’t even know her.”

Jordyn fired a sharp glare at Cathryn, but Cathryn didn’t flinch. Her eyes—clear, cold, unyielding—stayed fixed on Douglas with such force that a chill slid up the old man’s spine.

Douglas smoothed Vanessa’s hair again, his tone turning absolute. “Since my granddaughter wants it, it’s not leaving our family.”

Cathryn’s jaw tightened. “That’s not how this works. The sale was made. You can’t just reverse it.”

Douglas gave a dismissive huff and waved her off. “Name your price. I’ll give it back.”

“Money means nothing to me,” Cathryn snapped. “I want the painting.”

A dark, almost vicious glint flashed in Douglas’s eyes. “Since you don’t know what’s good for you, you’ll get neither the money nor the painting.”

Cathryn drew in a sharp breath, fists clenched until her knuckles ached. “It’s mine now. If you take it by force, you’ll have to answer to the law.”

Closing the distance, Douglas’s voice turned razor-sharp. “In this city, the law starts and ends with me.”

From across the room, a new voice split the tension cleanly. “Big words for one family. Since when did Olekgan belong to the Grants?”

Gavin strode forward, his gaze fearless, daring anyone to challenge him.

Gavin’s tone stayed steady as he stepped forward. “The painting’s rightful owner is Ms. Moore. She purchased it fair and square from Mr. Brooks. I suggest you hand it back, Mr. Grant.”

Douglas's mouth curled into a taunting smile. "Is that so? Then enlighten us. What exactly is the connection between this young woman and Mr. Brooks?"

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Chapter 65:

Interest sharpened across the room as every eye locked onto Gavin. He only shrugged, a faint smile tugging at his lips. "Mr. Brooks's personal life isn't up for discussion tonight. If I were you, I'd leave it alone."

Douglas scoffed, folding his arms. "I'm not one to tremble at Andrew's name. He's just a young fella, nothing more. That painting isn't leaving Grandcrest Tower, no matter what you say."

Gavin's eyes narrowed, flicking briefly toward the upper floor.

Inside the VIP room, Andrew idly spun the ring on his finger, his voice low. "Now."

Almost on cue, the grand doors below flew open. Uniformed officers poured into the ballroom, forming a wall around the Grants and cutting off every route of escape.

The crowd erupted into whispers and wide-eyed gasps, unease spreading through the air like smoke.

Rage snapped through Douglas's voice. "Who do you think you are? Get your police chief here, right now!"

Everyone knew the police chief answered to Douglas. That was supposed to end it.

Instead, the lead officer didn't flinch. "We're with the federal task force. Local police have no say in this."

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A bolt of panic shot through Douglas. He straightened, struggling to keep control. “Do you have any idea who you’re speaking to? I’m Douglas Grant, president of the Olekgan Chamber of Commerce!”

The officer’s expression didn’t change. “That’s exactly why we’re here. Officers, arrest him.”

From the crowd, someone cried out, “There must be a mistake! Douglas is the city’s most generous soul—this auction was for the children!”

But the officer’s words sliced through the illusion in the room. “The complaint we received was about the payment account. After investigating, we found every donation was rerouted through the Brightlight Charity Foundation and straight into the Grant family accounts. For years, all those ‘gifts’ went right into their pockets. The charity was a front—billions laundered.”

Outrage exploded in the crowd. Where moments ago there had been applause, now came shouts and furious accusations. Officers slapped handcuffs on the Grants as they struggled and cursed, refusing to go quietly.

Sobbing uncontrollably, Vanessa thrashed and clawed at the air as she was dragged away, her desperate eyes searching the upper floors for someone—anyone—to save her.

Pulled out of the hall in plain view of Andrew, Vanessa could only wonder what he thought of her now.

Jordyn wasted no time putting distance between herself and the chaos. “This isn’t my problem! I had nothing to do with their mess!”

Before she could slip away, Cathryn spoke up, her tone crisp. “Half the artwork sold tonight came from Jordyn—she let Douglas have them for next to nothing.”

Recognition flashed in the officer’s eyes. He motioned to his team. “She’s coming with us.”

Handcuffs clicked around Jordyn’s wrists. She lunged toward Cathryn, screaming furiously. “You’ll pay for this! You hear me? You’ll regret it!”

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Midnight Lilies found its way back into Cathryn's hands. She didn't move, standing tall as the police cars drove the Grants and Jordyn out of sight. Cold resolve burned in her eyes. Justice didn't lose its way—even if it sometimes took time to catch up.

She remembered the officer mentioning that a buyer's complaint had triggered everything. The person who spent the most tonight was Andrew. Could it really have been him?

As her fingertips traced the canvas, gratitude swelled in her chest. She no longer doubted her decision to trust Andrew with her program. The moment she saw him again, she would hand him the program she'd kept hidden for so long.

During the ride home, Cathryn glanced at Gavin, uncertainty threading her voice. "Did you actually see Andrew at the auction?"

Gavin offered a gentle smile and shook his head. "He had Ethan with him all night. I'm just the butler—I don't get that close."

She mulled that over, then asked, "Do you know him at all?"

Gavin kept his tone respectful. "The Brooks heirs are my employers. It's not my place to know them—only to serve them."

Cathryn respected that. Gavin never played favorites, treating every Brooks, legitimate or not, with the same steady courtesy.

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Later that...

That night, when Cathryn stepped into the house, she found her husband already waiting at the table.

“Wash up and come eat,” he called out.

She looked around. “Where’s Margaret tonight?”

Andrew didn’t look up from his seat. “I gave her the evening off.”

Taking her seat, Cathryn’s eyes widened at the feast laid out before her—fresh oysters, perfectly roasted asparagus, decadent chocolate mousse, and a pot of mulled wine sending sweet spice into the air. She couldn’t help but frown. “Did Margaret really whip up all of this by herself?”

Andrew filled her glass and slid it across the table. “And what if I told you I cooked tonight?”

Her eyebrows climbed as Cathryn studied the dishes with suspicion. “Margaret’s meals have definitely gotten a lot heavier lately.”

He met her gaze with a hint of mischief. Earlier, he’d told Margaret to put together a table of rich, nourishing dishes—meant to keep Cathryn strong and energized. He’d tried a menu like this before and knew just how restorative good food could be.

“Margaret thinks you could add a few pounds. She wanted to make sure you actually eat something for a change,” he explained.

He was determined—one way or another—to break through her reserve tonight.

Cathryn toyed with her wine, letting her thoughts drift.

Andrew watched her carefully. “Something on your mind?”

The words spilled out before she could stop them. “Your brother.”

He stiffened instantly.

“I mean Andrew Brooks,” she added quickly.

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Chapter 67:

A sharp glint appeared in his eyes. “Are you really going to talk about another man at dinner with your husband?”

She brushed off his protest. “He helped me again today.”

Andrew sipped his wine, brooding. “Always butting in. Forget thanking him. You should be thanking me instead.”

Cathryn rolled her eyes. “You can’t compare yourself to him.”

He looked up, bracing himself. “What do I have that he doesn’t?”

She gave him a slow once-over. “Other than being a little easier on the eyes, you come up short everywhere else.”

He nearly choked, color rushing to his cheeks as outrage overtook him.

Andrew fixed Cathryn with a look that brooked no argument. “Don’t forget—you still owe me thirty million. Isn’t it about time you settled up?”

Heat rushed to Cathryn’s cheeks, burning all the way to her ears. She had agreed to it, fair and square. There was no point dodging now. Head bowed, she gave a small nod. Dragging it out would only make it worse. A promise was a promise.

A flicker of satisfaction crossed Andrew’s face. He pushed his plate aside and stood. “I’ll shower first.”

He was quick about it. By the time he emerged, Cathryn had only just set down her utensils.

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His gaze drifted from her empty plate to the drained wineglass, and a knowing smirk tugged at his lips. With a spread like that, she would be warm and unsettled—exactly as intended. He toweling his hair, his voice dropping low. “Are we going to your room tonight, or should I wait in mine?”

Cathryn looked up and nearly forgot how to breathe. A towel sat dangerously low on his hips, water glistening on his sculpted shoulders, each drop tracing a path down firm muscle. Her thoughts scattered, and her cheeks flared hotter.

He looked like something torn from an artist’s dream—every line precise, every angle catching the light in a way that felt unfair. All her earlier teasing about his looks hadn’t done him justice. Next to him, even Andrew seemed ordinary. No one else came close.

Cathryn gave her head a small shake, startled by her own runaway thoughts. Why was her mind drifting to his brother when she didn’t even know his face?

Voice barely above a whisper, she finally said, “M-my room.”

Andrew didn't hesitate. He crossed over and gently pinched her cheek, his words unexpectedly soft. "I already ran the bath, left out fresh towels, and your toothbrush is ready."

Cathryn lowered her gaze and nodded. His small acts of consideration always caught her off guard, leaving her flustered in spite of herself.

She let the steam wrap around her, lingering longer than usual as her nerves tightened into knots.

Meanwhile, Andrew sprawled across the bed, every ounce of patience stretched thin. He almost found it funny—he'd spent his life untouched by desire and never missed it. But after just one night with Cathryn, he'd been hooked. Every time he...

...closed his eyes, he could still feel her warmth—memory burning brighter with each passing day.

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Chapter 68:

Margaret's "nutritious dinners" certainly hadn't helped. If anything, each meal only left him more restless, his self-control stretched to its limit. He had waited what felt like forever, and tonight was finally his.

He ran through every scrap of advice he'd ever read, a rush of confidence rising in his chest. After tonight, he told himself, there would be no more calculating, no more chasing. Cathryn would come to him on her own.

A slow, satisfied smile curved his lips.

The click of the door echoed in the quiet room.

Cathryn slipped inside, her pajamas hanging loose, her steps heavy—as if she wished she could rewind time and postpone the night entirely.

Without a word, Andrew crossed the space between them and pulled her into his embrace. His breathing was already uneven. "So, are you going to stall all night," he murmured against her hair, "or do you have a new excuse ready for me?"

Cathryn stiffened, clutching the fabric at her chest. Her voice trembled. “Please... don’t. Not now...”

Andrew lifted his head, eyes dark with heat and impatience. A crooked smile tugged at his mouth. “You keep saying no like you expect me to just let it go.”

Her throat tightened. “Could we—just not tonight?”

He caught her hand, holding it as if to anchor her in place, his grip firm but not harsh. “I’ve been holding back for hours,” he said, voice rough. “And you want me to stop now? That’s cruel, Cathryn.”

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She froze, staring at him, breath shallow—caught between fear and the unbearable pressure of his gaze.

A low laugh rumbled from his chest, softer this time. “Relax,” he said, the edge in him forced into restraint. “I’ll be gentle. There’s no rush tonight.”

His hand started to move—then Cathryn’s shot out, catching his wrist.

Her voice was barely more than air. “I’m sorry... My period started.”

Something in him seemed to lock, then fracture.

The light drained from Andrew’s expression, darkness sweeping in like a storm.

For a second, Cathryn saw it—how a single sentence could split the world beneath his feet. She hadn’t meant to apologize, not for something she couldn’t control...

...control. Only now, sensing the weight of his frustration, did she realize how easily her words could sting.

Like a child caught stealing sweets, Cathryn rushed to explain, tripping over herself. “I’m usually regular... I don’t know why it came early this month.”

Andrew closed his eyes and drew a long, steadying breath. “It’s not on you.”

Maybe the heavy food had thrown her body off, disrupting her cycle. He pinched the bridge of his nose, trying to quiet the storm in his veins.

Cathryn searched his face, voice small. “Are you hurting? Is there anything I can do?”

She was hopelessly inexperienced when it came to intimacy.

Instead of answering, Andrew opened his eyes—red-rimmed with want—and began buttoning her pajamas again, one careful button at a time. A faint smile flickered at the corner of his mouth. “Don’t worry about me. Are you alright? Any pain?”

Cathryn nodded. “A little. Cramps.”

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Chapter 69:

“Come here,” he murmured.

He pulled her onto his lap with surprising gentleness, settling her against him. His hand came to rest warm and steady over her stomach, rubbing slow circles that eased the tight knot of discomfort.

Cathryn softened into him, letting the rhythm of his heartbeat and the clean, post-shower scent of his skin chase away the last of her tension. For the first time in her life, she felt something close to safety—quiet, steady peace in someone’s arms.

Her father had never held her. He had never offered comfort—only harsh words and the crack of a whip, leaving her bruised and wary of any man who stood too close.

Marriage to Liam had brought nothing but cold shoulders and cutting insults. But here, now, she was wrapped in warmth she’d never known.

Without thinking, Kathryn snuggled closer—and accidentally brushed against him again.

Andrew went rigid. His voice dropped, rough with warning. “Don’t move. Unless you want this to go somewhere you’re not ready for.”

Cathryn understood in a flash and slid off Andrew’s lap in a hurry.

Andrew ruffled her hair with a soft chuckle. “Go get some sleep. I’ll have Margaret back in the morning to look after you.”

She stayed quiet, watching him walk out. He moved stiffly, his usual poise nowhere to be found.

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With a bucket of ice in tow, Andrew locked himself in the bathroom, dumped it over his head, and let the freezing water do its work. Sometimes, he wondered if icing himself down like this night after night would ruin his health in the long run.

The following morning, Margaret showed up bright and early, eager to whip up breakfast. When Andrew stepped into the hall, she caught him with a sly grin.

“You’re up early today, Mr. Brooks. Didn’t want to linger in bed with your wife?”

He shot her a level look. “Thanks for the... power dinner last night.”

Margaret waved a playful hand. “Don’t mention it. Just trying to help. But you know, tempting a man over and over and then making him hold back isn’t good for you. Too

much frustration and it starts messing with your body. Men who go too long like that can even have trouble having kids, you know!”

A flicker of doubt crossed Andrew’s face. Trouble with children—just from holding himself back?

Margaret kept going, undeterred. “Everything in moderation, I say. Let the tension build too much and you’ll regret it sooner or later.”

Andrew exhaled slowly. “I won’t be around much the next few days. Stay here with Cathryn. She’ll need you.”

Every time he saw Cathryn, his restraint nearly snapped. Better not to see her at all.

Margaret stared, surprised he would decide to disappear after barely a night together.

Expressionless, Andrew added, “She started her period last night. Make sure she has whatever she needs.”

Margaret’s jaw dropped. “Her period? So nothing happened between you two?”

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Chapter 70:

He gave her a cool look. “I’m not the type to cross that line, Margaret.”

Margaret bit her lip, realizing she’d spoken out of turn yet again.

When Cathryn woke to an empty room, she asked Margaret where Damien had gone. Margaret explained that he would be working late at the office for the next several days.

The news caught Cathryn off guard. She hadn’t expected a man of his status—an illegitimate son—to actually be clocking in like a regular nine-to-fiver.

Not long after, Cathryn called Gavin to her room. “I want you to have a few people take down all these fakes in here and hang this one, Midnight Lilies, front and center.”

Gavin’s eyes flicked over the gallery of paintings by Louis Marquet and Claude Merville, his expression giving nothing away. “Mrs. Brooks, you might want to reconsider. Those aren’t copies.”

Cathryn let out a light laugh. “They’re definitely good fakes. Whoever Damien hired to paint them really has talent. But there’s no way those are the real deal.”

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Gavin asked, “What makes you so sure?”

She pointed at the paintings one by one. “Do you have any idea how much a genuine Marquet would sell for? Or a Merville? If these were authentic, they could buy out half the city. You really think Damien is sitting on a fortune like that?”

Gavin only bowed, the smallest hint of a smile tugging at his lips.

Cathryn wandered from canvas to canvas, shaking her head. “Those paintings have been scattered across the globe for generations. It’s impossible to round them up, let alone keep them hidden in a bedroom.”

Her mother had possessed an almost magical talent—she could spot a forgery at a glance. Unfortunately, Cathryn hadn't inherited that knack. Still, she told herself her reasoning was sound. Even her mother, with her wealth and sharp eye, had only managed to collect a handful of originals. Damien was just the family's illegitimate son. There was no way he'd managed to pull off the impossible.

And anyway, if someone truly owned treasures like these, they would hang them in the grand hall for every guest to admire, not stash them away in a private bedroom. That alone screamed fraud.

Cathryn's lips curled into a half-smile. "Damien likes to act cultured, but it's all just smoke and mirrors."

Gavin remained composed, offering a respectful nod. "As you wish, Mrs. Brooks. I'll have the 'fakes' removed right away and your mother's painting displayed in their place."

Within the hour, the walls stood bare except for Midnight Lilies, taking center stage like a jewel in a crown.

Cathryn stood before the painting, her vision clouding as memories tugged at her heart. Regret gnawed at her. Why hadn't she spent more time learning from her mother?

...her mother, absorbing her wisdom. Now it was too late, and all she had left was a canvas and the ache of loss. The rest of her mother's collection—those cherished pieces—

were in Andrew's possession. She wondered if she would ever get them back, or if they were gone for good.

Five days passed without so much as a word from Andrew.

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Chapter 71:

Strangely, Cathryn's period had been a breeze this time; her stomach didn't give her the usual trouble at all. Only Margaret seemed uneasy, hovering as if she were walking on eggshells.

The quiet broke one morning when Cathryn's phone rang, an unfamiliar number flashing on the screen.

Her father's voice oozed through the speaker. "You never change, do you, Cathryn? Always trying to ruin your sister. And now you want her behind bars?"

Cathryn had blocked Richard before, but clearly he had found a way around it.

He didn't even pause for breath. "Too bad for you—Jordyn's already been released."

That didn't surprise Cathryn. She'd never expected Jordyn to stay locked up for long. Technically, those things had been hers before the marriage. But with a slick lawyer, Liam could twist it—claiming the assets were joint property, then reframe them as gifts to Jordyn, who had simply "sold" them off to an old family friend. It could all be dressed up as perfectly legitimate.

Then Jordyn's voice slid onto the line, too sweet to be real. "Surprised I'm out already, Cathryn?"

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Cathryn's gaze turned to ice.

Jordyn's laugh rang out—cruel and bright. “Honestly, you should be thanking your mother for all of this.”

Cathryn's hands balled into fists, her voice turning to steel. “Say that again, Jordyn.”

A laugh—bright and shameless—crackled through the line. “Dad didn't even blink at the cost of getting me out. Every cent came from your mother's assets. So tell me, shouldn't I be thanking her?”

Blood pooled under Kathryn's nails as her fingers bit into her palm. Jordyn's audacity wasn't new, but Richard's unwavering favoritism stung like a fresh wound.

No matter how many times Jordyn got herself into trouble, Richard would move mountains to save her. But when Kathryn did everything right, all she ever earned was his anger—sometimes, his cruelty.

Even when Kathryn had outshone Jordyn in school, Richard made sure to snuff out Kathryn's future. If Kathryn hadn't found a way to keep learning in secret, she would have grown up knowing nothing at all.

Jordyn's voice cut in again, thick with smug satisfaction. “Oh, and you'll love this. My mom tracked down Dr. Clarke. He's on a plane right now—flying to Olekgan just to treat my scar personally.”

Jordyn was practically gloating. Cathryn might have secured Adrian’s medication, but this was the real trophy: once Adrian learned she was Liam’s wife, he was willing to drop everything and fly in himself. For a doctor of his stature, it was almost unthinkable. Maybe being Liam’s wife had its perks after all. Sometimes, marrying the right man really did open doors.

Cathryn’s eyes narrowed as the realization landed—Adrian was truly coming to Olekgan.

Jordyn’s voice dripped with satisfaction. “Mom and Liam are rolling out the red carpet for Dr. Clarke tonight. Private dinner at the Grand Restaurant. Want to see the show for yourself? You’re invited.”

It wasn’t kindness. Jordyn wanted Cathryn there, front and center, to witness Liam’s affection and watch the world-famous doctor erase every trace of that scar. She wanted Cathryn to understand exactly where she stood—outside the circle, looking in.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 72:

Cathryn's reply came out smooth as glass. "Since you went to the trouble of inviting me, how could I possibly refuse? Save me a seat, Jordyn."

Jordyn sneered. "We won't even begin until you walk through the door."

A faint smirk tugged at Kathryn's lips. After all her searching for Adrian, Jordyn had unknowingly set the stage for their meeting herself.

She would be there tonight—no matter what.

To watch Jordyn's hopes shatter, piece by piece. And she was determined to get a straight answer from Adrian about why he had agreed to treat Jordyn at all.

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Upstairs at the Grand Restaurant, Adrian was already waiting in the private dining suite.

Liam sat beside him, filling glasses with practiced ease, while Jordyn and her mother had yet to make their entrance.

Liam offered a respectful nod as he topped off Adrian's glass. "Dr. Clarke, I have to admit—I expected someone much older."

Adrian's legend was well known, carried on whispers and rumors. Most assumed he would be a silver-haired recluse, perhaps even pushing seventy. But the man sitting here looked barely into his forties, sharp-featured, with a youthfulness that made him seem even younger.

Adrian studied the man across from him and spoke in a cool, even tone. "You must be Liam Watson."

Straightening in his seat, Liam tried not to show his nerves. "That's right. I'm running Watson Tech these days. Having you join us is more than I could've hoped for."

Zoe, eager to impress, had once struck up a conversation with Cara at a society party. Through that connection, she'd caught wind of Adrian's whereabouts and sent message after message trying to arrange a meeting. Adrian had dismissed them all without a second thought.

But the moment a request came through for "the daughter of the Moore family, wife of Watson Tech's CEO," Adrian had changed his mind and booked a flight to Olekgan on the spot.

Liam was stunned. Adrian—a doctor beyond reach, one even the wealthiest failed to secure—had come just for them.

Adrian lifted his glass, his gaze steady. “I’m here because your wife asked.”

The words caught Liam off guard. “You know my wife?”

A rare smile flickered across Adrian’s lips. “I do. Her mother was a dear friend. I held your wife in my arms when she was just a baby.”

Liam pieced it together—a physician beyond price, one whom billionaires couldn’t reach, yet somehow Jordyn had captured his attention. It hit him then that his wife was more extraordinary than he’d ever guessed. No wonder even Kestrel valued her connections.

Pride swelled in his chest. For once, he couldn’t help feeling lucky.

Adrian’s gaze shifted. “And how is your wife doing these days?”

“She’s alright,” Liam answered a little too quickly. “It’s just... she has this scar she can’t get rid of. It’s been a source of pain for her.”

A crease formed between Adrian’s brows. “Did she not use the treatment I sent last time?”

The question stoked a fresh wave of irritation in Liam. Jordyn had told him Adrian personally provided the medicine, only for Cathryn to smash it in a fit of jealousy. His jaw clenched. “Her older sister destroyed it out of spite.”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 73:

Adrian’s eyes went cold. He remembered what he’d heard about Cathryn’s household—her stepmother and stepsister always finding new ways to hurt her. The wounds on Cathryn’s back were a cruel legacy. Yet something about the details felt wrong. He could have sworn it was always the younger sister who’d been the worst. Was he misremembering? Or had the story been rewritten?

Liam let out a sigh. “You only ever make one batch of your medicines. Jordyn’s been devastated. There’s nothing I can do to help.”

A faint, amused smirk tugged at Adrian’s lips. “She’s stubborn as ever. Turns down my help, then runs home to cry for sympathy. Sounds more like she enjoys the attention than she actually wants to heal.”

Liam sat frozen, the pieces snapping into place. Jordyn had rejected the treatment herself—then played the wounded victim to keep him focused on her. The realization hit like a slap. He’d misread her completely. The urge to kick himself rose hot and sharp in his chest.

Adrian’s tone stayed light, but his eyes were keen. “You and your wife seem to have a good relationship.”

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Grateful for a chance to steer away from the topic, Liam nodded quickly. “We’ve been married three years. She means everything to me.”

Jordyn’s network. Her supposed connection to Kestrel. Now Adrian himself. It all fed Liam’s pride, swelling it higher than it had any right to be.

A faint smile curved Adrian’s lips. “That’s good to hear. If your family ever needs help, just ask. I’ll do what I can.”

Liam's heart soared. He rose to his feet at once, lifting his glass in a toast. A promise from Adrian Clarke was worth more than any fortune.

Meanwhile, Cathryn stepped into the restaurant lobby just as Zoe and Jordyn arrived, their heels clicking crisply against the tile. Jordyn's smirk appeared instantly. "Well, well, Cathryn. Didn't think you'd have the nerve to show your face tonight."

Cathryn didn't so much as blink. "A reclusive legend like Adrian gets lured out? Of course I'd be here to see it for myself."

Jordyn and Zoe exchanged a glance, quietly savoring their triumph. Even they hadn't believed that simply invoking Jordyn's identity would be enough to draw Adrian out of hiding.

Jordyn's tone turned triumphant. "Your husband managed to scrounge up a single bottle of Adrian's medicine. Mine brought the man himself all the way to Olekgan. Guess that makes me the winner."

Cathryn rolled her eyes. Was Jordyn always this obsessed with turning everything into a contest?

Jordyn clung tighter to Zoe, her voice dripping with satisfaction. "I'm the real Mrs. Watson now. If you regret letting him go, too bad. You're far too late."

Jordyn stopped at the entrance to the private suite and said, “Go ahead. Open the door.”

She was bossing Cathryn around as if she owned the place.

Cathryn was too eager to see Adrian to waste energy arguing. Without another word, she pushed the door open herself.

Adrian was inside.

Seventeen years had slipped by. Cathryn had changed, but he looked exactly as she remembered.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 74:

Adrian looked up the moment she stepped in. A gentle, almost fatherly smile warmed his face. He had been there when she was born, and he had come again when Bettina fell ill.

He had even traveled all the way to Olekgan to help Bettina, but the Moores had refused to let him anywhere near. Richard and his mistress had gone so far as to spread rumors, accusing him of having an affair with Bettina.

Furious, Adrian had left Olekgan and sworn he would never return.

And now, nearly two decades later, fate had brought them together again.

Jordyn and Zoe followed Cathryn inside. The first thing they noticed was Adrian still smiling—while Liam sat with him like an old acquaintance. It was obvious, at least to them, that he had only agreed to come because of the Watson name.

Without hesitation, Zoe strode forward and offered her hand. “Dr. Clarke, it’s truly an honor to meet you.”

Adrian stepped back. “Forgive me, but I don’t shake hands with people I don’t know.”

Zoe’s smile faltered as she lowered her hand. “Of course. I understand.”

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Adrian studied her face for a moment, as if something about her seemed familiar. Then his gaze slid past her and landed on Cathryn lingering near the doorway. His voice turned light, teasing. “What’s the matter? Can’t recognize your own husband? Come on—take a seat beside him.”

Cathryn stayed rooted where she was.

Jordyn shoved past her, grinning, and hurried to Liam. She kissed his cheek and clung to his arm, eager for everyone to see just how close they were.

Since Adrian had come all this way for the Watson family, Jordyn wanted him to witness every display of affection between her and Liam.

Liam was quick to pull her close, eager to play along.

Adrian already knew who Jordyn was, so Liam put on a performance, treating her with exaggerated care to impress him.

Watching a woman cling to Liam with such practiced familiarity made Adrian's expression darken like a gathering storm. He glanced back at Cathryn, searching for a reaction, but she barely moved. She only offered a faint, knowing smile and a small shake of her head.

Adrian kept his questions to himself—for now.

With a slight lift of her chin, Jordyn sneered, "Take a seat," and shot Cathryn a dismissive glare.

Without a word, Cathryn crossed the room and took the empty chair beside Adrian.

Liam's gaze turned icy as he addressed Adrian. "That's Jordyn's spiteful sister. She's the one who hurt Jordyn and destroyed the medicine you gave her."

He was lying, hoping to win Adrian's favor. Anyone who offended the daughter of Adrian's old friend was bound to pay for it.

But Adrian's memory was sharp. He remembered exactly which sister had always been the troublemaker. It was the younger one—the same woman now glued to Liam's side.

His voice cooled. “If I remember correctly, Mr. Watson, your wife is the eldest Moore daughter.”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 75:

Both Liam and Jordyn went rigid.

Liam cleared his throat. “That marriage was only a deal between our families. My heart was never in it. I’ve always cared for Jordyn.”

Adrian's eyes narrowed further. "Then why did you marry Cathryn instead of Jordyn?"

The question threw Liam completely off balance. The truth was simple—he'd seen their photos, and Cathryn's beauty had drawn him in. But on the wedding night, too much alcohol and one terrible decision had led Jordyn into his bed. After that, Jordyn refused to let go. Three years passed, and he was still tangled up with her.

Adrian's attention shifted to Jordyn. "Tell me. People say Richard spoils you rotten. If you truly wanted Liam, do you honestly think he would have dared to turn you down?"

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Jordyn hesitated, caught off guard. "What was I supposed to do? Compete against my own sister?"

To be honest, Liam had never caught her eye. Back then, the Watson family's fortune was fading, and she'd set her sights higher. If she was going to marry, it would've been Andrew—the wealthiest man in Olekgan. She only changed her mind after hearing he'd been in a car crash and had lost everything.

With the Watsons now on the rise, Jordyn was desperate to shove Cathryn out of the picture and claim the title of Mrs. Watson for herself.

The room seemed to turn colder as Cathryn stared at the lovers with steely eyes. She took her time, sipping from her glass, then said quietly, "I can explain it for you, Dr. Clarke.

Some people are so shameless they'll claw at anything that isn't theirs. Even if it's worthless, they still have to be the first to snatch it."

Jordyn's composure shattered. "Cathryn! Who are you calling shameless? Who are you calling worthless?"

Unbothered, Cathryn kept sipping her drink, ignoring the outburst.

Adrian's gaze moved between Jordyn, her mother, and Liam. Everything finally clicked into place. He understood now—it was the younger sister who had stolen Cathryn's husband. All this talk of "Mrs. Watson" was really about Jordyn, not Cathryn.

A bitter smile tugged at Adrian's lips as he shook his head. "I almost believed the wrong story. I'm glad I decided to see for myself."

Zoe forced a brittle smile. "Rumor has it you're a distant man, Dr. Clarke. Most say you cure someone once and never return. Who would have guessed you'd make a personal visit for my daughter?"

Adrian looked straight at Zoe, his gaze sharp. "Actually, you and I have met before."

He remembered now—this was the same woman who had helped Richard drag his name through the mud all those years ago, accusing him of things he never did with Bettina.

Zoe froze, struggling to keep her façade intact. She didn't believe they'd ever crossed paths.

Trying to lighten the mood, Liam laughed. "So that's why you said Jordyn was your friend's daughter. You and Zoe go way back, huh?"

Zoe forced a nervous giggle. "I-I suppose we've met before. My memory isn't what it used to be."

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 76:

Adrian's stare turned glacial, anger flickering in his eyes. "We have unfinished business, Zoe. Now that we've crossed paths again, it's time we put it to rest."

Zoe frantically sifted through her memory, trying to recall when she might have crossed paths with Adrian. But in the end, it didn't matter. She could spin a connection out of thin air if it meant getting what she wanted—Jordyn's scar erased.

Plastering on a warm, earnest smile, Zoe said, "Since we're old acquaintances, may I trouble you to remove my daughter's scar?"

Adrian's eyes drifted to Jordyn's neck, his tone calm but edged with gravity. "That mark came from a special whip—one of the ten most brutal weapons in the underworld. Whoever purchased such a thing had a very cruel mind."

Zoe's smile froze. That whip, which she had imported herself, had been acquired for one reason only—to make Cathryn writhe in agony. She had never imagined the punishment would come full circle, scarring her own daughter instead.

But Zoe refused to give in. Jordyn needed to be healed. Jordyn needed to remain Mrs. Watson.

"That bitch Cathryn set her up!" Zoe snarled, stabbing an accusing finger toward Cathryn.

Adrian slipped a small white porcelain vial from his pocket, his thumb brushing over the embossed "C."

Zoe and Jordyn straightened at once, their gazes locked on the vial, every muscle taut with the urge to snatch it away. They had seen its power once before—Cathryn's scars had vanished without a trace, as if they had never existed.

"Thank you, Dr. Clarke," Jordyn said softly, reaching out toward him.

But Adrian pivoted, extending the vial toward Cathryn instead. "What do you think, Cathryn? Should I let them have it?"

Cathryn's lips curved into a faint, almost taunting smile as she took it from him, holding it delicately between her fingers. "They keep calling me a bitch," she said lightly. "If that's the role they've given me, I suppose I should play it properly."

With a flick of her wrist, Cathryn pulled the stopper free and poured the dark brown liquid onto the floor.

Zoe and Jordyn went rigid, their pupils dilating in shock. The scene was a cruel déjà vu. The miracle cure had slipped through their fingers—again. And then...

The realization hit them like a physical blow. Adrian and Cathryn... they weren't strangers at all. Adrian's so-called "old friend"—had it been Bettina all along?

All the color drained from Liam's face, leaving him deathly pale. He'd assumed Adrian had come for Zoe and Jordyn. But no—Adrian had come for Bettina and Cathryn. No wonder Adrian's eyes had carried contempt earlier. No wonder his voice had been edged with frost.

And Liam had just spewed foul lies about Cathryn right in front of him, painting her as the monster in the room.

Giving in wasn't an option—Zoe held her ground with iron resolve. With Adrian standing only feet away, she had to take her shot. She dropped to her knees with a hard thud, clutching the edge of his coat.

"Dr. Clarke, you said earlier that we've met before. For the sake of that old connection, I beg you—heal Jordyn's scar. She's still just a girl. How can she live with a scar like this on her neck?"

Cathryn's gaze sharpened as she watched Zoe kneeling on the floor. Whenever things turned dire, Zoe would throw herself down in shameless pleading—but the moment she got what she wanted, she'd turn her back without hesitation.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 77:

Adrian set his wine glass aside. His expression was carved from steel as he looked down at Zoe.

“Have you truly forgotten?” he asked. “Seventeen years ago, you and Richard cornered me at Olekgan Airport and accused me of having an affair with Bettina. Because of you, I never saw her again.”

The blood drained from Zoe’s face. Her knees buckled, and she crumpled onto the floor. At last, the memory slammed into her—clear and merciless.

Bettina had once taken on an eager apprentice, a young man determined to master the art of medicine—Adrian. When he learned of her sudden illness, he had rushed to Olekgan in

panic, only for Zoe—terrified that the drugs she had secretly given Bettina would be exposed—to pour poison into Richard’s ear. Together, they had ambushed Adrian at the airport, smearing him with lies of an affair.

Back then, Adrian hadn’t made a name for himself yet. Zoe had erased him from memory long ago. Yet here he was again, carrying the cure Jordyn so desperately wanted.

“It—it wasn’t me,” Zoe stammered, her voice shaking. “It was Richard. He was the one who suspected you and Bettina...”

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Shifting the blame—her oldest trick.

Adrian straightened, his shadow falling over her. His gaze burned with scorn.

“You bought the whip that tore into Cathryn, didn’t you? Now it’s your daughter who carries its mark. Call it fate, call it karma—I call it justice.”

The realization struck Jordyn like a thunderclap—Adrian’s hatred had never been aimed at her. It had always been her mother he despised. She crumpled to her knees and clutched his trouser leg in desperation.

“It was all my mother’s doing, not mine. Please, Dr. Clarke, heal my scar. I’ll pay whatever it takes.”

Adrian’s laugh was a sharp, cold exhale.

“You dared to cross Cathryn. For that, you won’t get so much as a drop of my medicine for the rest of your life.”

The words pierced straight through Jordyn, landing with the force of lightning. With that scar carved into her neck and chest forever, how was she supposed to endure day after day?

Adrian’s voice stayed low and even as he turned to Cathryn. “Come on, Cathryn. Let’s go.”

Without a word, Cathryn rose and followed him.

The moment the door shut, Jordyn broke down, shrieking through her tears as she clawed at Zoe. “Why did you have to offend Adrian? What am I supposed to do with this scar now?”

Zoe was speechless, her mind blank with shock. Who could have imagined that a decision made seventeen years ago would return to ruin her life today?

Across the table, Liam sat rigid, throwing back glass after glass of wine as if each swallow might dull the sting. All this time, he had believed Zoe and Jordyn were the ones with powerful connections—only to learn Bettina and Cathryn had been the true forces shaping everything. It had never once crossed his mind that Cathryn was close to Adrian.

And now the bitter thought twisted deeper: if he had never signed those divorce papers, that connection might have belonged to him. To know a man like Adrian personally—what a privilege that would have been.

Zoe fixed Jordyn with a sharp glare, warning her with nothing but her eyes that Liam was still present. This was not the time to lose control.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 78:

Jordyn swallowed her sobs instantly and fell silent.

Straightening, Zoe poured Liam a drink herself. “Adrian’s no good,” she said evenly, twisting reality as she spun her story. “He’s been pining after Bettina for years. For all we know, Cathryn could be their illegitimate child.”

A faint twitch of Liam’s brows betrayed his reaction. Was that why Richard had always despised Cathryn so much?

Zoe barreled on, refusing to yield. “Adrian’s just a doctor—he’s never cared about money. Cathryn’s barely literate. But you’re different. You’re well-groomed, polished, with a degree from a prestigious university abroad.”

A spark lit in Jordyn’s eyes as Zoe’s words took root.

Jordyn swayed closer, perched herself on Liam’s lap, and whispered against his ear, “I’ve already made contact with Kestrel. He’s in Olekgan as we speak.”

“Wait—you’re serious?” Liam set his glass down, surprise widening his eyes.

A smug curve tugged at Jordyn’s lips as she dipped her head. She’d spent a small fortune hiring hackers to trace Kestrel, and they’d finally cracked his trail—straight to Olekgan.

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“Kestrel knows I’m here,” she declared, confidence ringing through her voice. “He came for me. This time, I’ll make sure he hands over the program’s code.”

For once, luck seemed to be on her side. She’d been racking her brain for a way to track Kestrel down, and now he had walked right into the very city where she’d spent most of her life.

Zoe’s gaze snagged on the small porcelain vial abandoned on the floor. A sharp inhale caught in her throat. She lunged for it, holding it up to the light—there were still a few precious drops clinging to the bottom.

“There have to be doctors who can analyze this,” she said, her voice quick with excitement. “If we break down the formula, we can duplicate the medicine exactly.”

Jordyn flung her arms around Liam’s neck, practically bouncing with glee. “Did you hear that? My scar will be as good as gone soon.”

Liam wrapped his arms around her waist, his voice low and steady. “I should never have made you feel neglected. You’re the one I love—more than looks, more than anything.”

The truth was, Jordyn's scar no longer mattered to him. What gnawed at him now was the hunt for Kestrel. With Kestrel on board, Watson Tech would finally go public, and everything else—beauty, status, security—would fall into place.

Jordyn pressed a quick, eager kiss to Liam's lips, her whole body thrumming with exhilaration.

Out in the hall, Cathryn's step faltered as a memory struck her—Adrian's vial was still sitting in the private room. If Zoe got her hands on it, she would no doubt try to reverse-engineer the medicine. Cathryn pivoted to go back, only to catch Jordyn's voice through the door, casually dropping that Kestrel was in Olekgan.

A faint crease formed between Cathryn's brows. So the hackers really had clawed their way past all those firewalls to pinpoint her in Olekgan. She would have to harden her defenses and roll out a fresh layer of encryption before nightfall.

Just then, Adrian stepped up beside her, guiding her away with gentle ease. "Don't trouble yourself over the vial," he insisted, his voice calm but firm. "No one can recreate what's inside. My expertise didn't earn its reputation by accident."

Relief softened Cathryn's shoulders. Together, they stepped out of the restaurant.

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 79:

“You really believed it was me who needed the scar-fading potion, didn’t you?” Cathryn teased, linking her arm through his as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Adrian flicked her forehead lightly, his tone carrying mild reproach. “When did you divorce Liam? Keeping that to yourself nearly led me into a terrible mistake.”

A crooked smile touched her lips. “You heard them yourself. Three years of marriage, and for three years he was sneaking around with Jordyn. Was I supposed to keep that marriage like a display piece?”

Adrian’s features softened, a shadow of relief passing through him. “Thank heaven you didn’t make the same mistake your mother did.”

Harold's voice had carried those exact words once before. Cathryn understood them all too well. Bettina had given her whole heart and been blinded by love. And thankfully, being Bettina's daughter, she hadn't repeated that fate.

"My mom..." Cathryn murmured, and the words broke apart on her tongue. Tears welled, then spilled down her cheeks. "She's already gone."

Adrian's expression darkened. He pulled her into a firm embrace, one hand stroking her hair.

"I heard," he said quietly. The moment his plane had landed, he'd gone searching for Bettina—only to be told she had taken her own life a month earlier.

"My mom would never kill herself." Cathryn's eyes burned, red and unyielding.

"I don't believe it either," Adrian murmured, his voice low and heavy. "But they cremated her the very day she died. I never had a chance to find out what really happened."

Cathryn's fists clenched so hard her knuckles cracked. Bettina had barely passed before Richard invoked his rights as her husband to have the body cremated, rushing to erase every trace—as if desperate to bury the truth with her.

Adrian's palm rested on Cathryn's head, his expression shadowed with quiet frustration. "I know nothing about power struggles—only medicine. I wouldn't even know where to begin if you asked me to take revenge."

Brushing away her tears, Cathryn lifted her chin and forced a small, steady smile. "I already have someone backing me, Adrian. That's one thing you don't need to worry about."

A faint arch of Adrian's brow betrayed his reaction. "You mean that man from the Brooks family?"

He remembered Amanda. The last time he had sent medicine to Cathryn, it had been at her request.

"How did you end up connected to the Brooks family?" Adrian asked, surprise flickering across his face.

Cathryn's voice dropped to a near whisper. "No sense hiding it from you. I just married into their family—my husband's name is Damien Brooks."

Adrian's cheek twitched as recognition struck. He remembered Amanda mentioning that name earlier. Damien—that had been Andrew's childhood name. So Cathryn had married the wealthiest man in Olekgan.

“He’s just an illegitimate son in the Brooks family,” Cathryn blurted, as if to reassure herself. “He barely has any real standing there. Our marriage was nothing more than a deal. When my mother’s revenge is done, the marriage is over.”

Adrian drew a sharp breath, astonishment flashing in his eyes. “You’re bold—daring to use a Brooks heir like that.”

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Once The Foolish Wife, Now His Eternal Obsession

Chapter 80:

Cathryn’s jaw tightened, fury sparking in her gaze. “Richard stayed married to my mother all those years, forged her will, and used his status to swallow up every cent of her assets. The day she died, the Watsons threw me out with nothing. I fell...”

...from being a wealthy woman to nothing more than a pauper, with no home left to return to. What else could I have done?"

Tears welled and spilled over, tracking down her cheeks. Selling herself to a man she didn't love was humiliating—but what other road was left? Vengeance burned in her blood, leaving no room for hesitation.

"Money's never meant a damn thing to me," Adrian choked out, his eyes glistening. "Not once have I ever thought of profiting from medicine. And yet... watching you fall this far, and being powerless to give you what you needed—it makes me drown in regret."

He pulled her against his chest in a fierce embrace.

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Cathryn shook her head, damp hair brushing her cheeks. "Don't put this on yourself. I'm not short of money anymore."

Adrian eased back just enough to look at her, then gently wiped away the tears clinging to her lashes. His voice stayed low and steady. "I've crossed paths with Amanda before. She's gracious and fair. If she's the one backing you, I can trust you won't suffer under that roof."

Cathryn managed only an uneasy nod. She hadn't dared face Amanda at all. If Amanda ever discovered that the granddaughter-in-law she had so carefully chosen had been swapped for someone else, the fallout would be a storm neither of them could contain.

Adrian dabbed away the last of his tears, scribbled a number onto a scrap of paper, and pressed it into Cathryn's palm. "I don't stay in one place long enough to keep a house, and I don't carry a phone. Call this number if you ever need me—someone will find me."

Cathryn slipped the paper into her bag as though it were something precious.

"My presence in Olekgan won't stay secret for long." Adrian brushed his knuckles over her cheek, his voice softening. "I have to go."

Too many wealthy clients clawed for his time, and he'd grown sick of greed and hollow flattery. What he craved now was silence—clean mountain air, and the solitude of a place no one could reach.

He vanished step by step into the dark while Cathryn stayed behind, watching until there was nothing left to see.

She had met Adrian only a handful of times, yet her feelings for him ran deeper than anything she had ever felt for Richard. Around Adrian, she found the rare comfort of a father's protection.

In that moment, her phone lit up with a message from Andrew. “Where are you? Why aren’t you home?”

Cathryn’s lips curved into a cold, faint smile. He had disappeared without a word through all five days of her period—no messages, not even a single call. And now, right after it was over, he showed up on cue. His intentions couldn’t have been more obvious.

Still, Cathryn’s mood stayed bright tonight. She had caught up with Adrian, watched Zoe and Jordyn disgrace themselves, and left Liam choking on humiliation.

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