

Chapter 4

Evan finally lost his temper completely. He grabbed his phone and made a call. It was answered almost immediately. “Sir.” “Find out where Jennifer Tanner and my wife are. Right now.” Patrick hesitated for a split second. “Understood.” “Now,” Evan barked. It was pouring rain this late at night. What did she think she was doing? She’d burned everything connected to their marriage. She’d made scenes before, but never like this. For the first time, a flicker of unease rose in Evan’s chest. Patrick moved fast. Ten minutes later, he called back. “Mrs. Wright is at Azure Heights on Starlake Avenue.” Evan narrowed his eyes. “What is she doing there?” Starlake Avenue. He didn’t remember them having any friends in that area. “Miss Tanner is with her,” Patrick added. At the mention of Jennifer, Evan’s expression darkened. In his view, women shouldn’t have close girlfriends. Once they did, it was like they suddenly grew ten extra brains. Every time Stella got together with Jennifer, nothing good ever came of it. By the time Evan arrived at Azure Heights, Stella—exhausted from the day—had already fallen asleep. Jennifer had left. Stella hadn’t wanted to go with her, so she decided to arrange for someone to come take care of Stella. Stella had just drifted off when the doorbell rang insistently, jolting her awake. She thought Jennifer might have forgotten something. Half-asleep, she got up and opened the door. “What did you forget to—” The word died on her lips when she saw Evan. Her expression immediately turned cold. “How did you find this place?” Evan’s face was hard. Raindrops still clung to his black suit jacket. “What do you think?” Seeing Stella in her pajamas only made his anger spike. He leaned forward and glanced inside. When he saw no one else there, his presence softened slightly. “Jennifer said you miscarried,” he said. “Wouldn’t it look bad if I didn’t come check on you?” As he spoke, he reached instinctively, grabbing her arm and pulling her toward him, familiar and practiced. But this time, Stella didn’t let herself be dragged into his arms. She stayed where she was, her gaze sharp and guarded. Meeting the cold in her eyes made something tighten briefly in Evan’s chest. But the next second, he smiled. “All right, all right. You miscarried. I’ll take care of you, okay?” That indifferent tone dripped with sarcasm. It was just short of saying she was faking it. The anger Jennifer had just managed to calm flared right back up. Stella lifted her leg and kicked him hard. Evan wasn’t prepared. The blow landed squarely in his stomach. He sucked in a sharp breath of pain and instinctively let go of her arm. Seeing her bristling like a cornered hedgehog gave him a headache. “You’ve made your scene. You burned half the house. Are you still not over it?” Stella said nothing. But the chill in her eyes deepened. Over it? This anger wasn’t going anywhere. Not unless someone paid for it. She let out a soft, humorless laugh. She didn’t say a word, but the mockery in that laugh made Evan feel inexplicably irritated. A dull headache throbbed behind his temples. “Enough,” Evan said, clearly exhausted. “This is on me. All of it. Okay? Come home with me.” As he spoke, he reached out again, trying to grab Stella’s arm. She stepped back, dodging him easily. Her distance, that icy rejection, finally wiped the patience from Evan’s face. His expression darkened completely, the air around them turning heavy and tight. “Is that really my home?” Stella let out a mocking laugh. “A house where the deed isn’t even in my name?” “The name on the title belongs to Fiona Wright.” Fiona was Evan’s younger sister. She was especially close to Summer. The villa Stella and Evan had lived in after their marriage had long since been transferred into Fiona’s name. The Wright family had never approved of Stella, an orphan raised without family backing. They’d agreed to the marriage under one condition. A secret marriage. Any time Evan tried to give Stella something substantial, his mother would quietly take it back and register it under the names of his two sisters instead. Even their marital home. They’d been terrified Stella might benefit from the Wright family in any way. “The house is in Fiona’s name,” Stella said calmly. “And you still call it my home. Don’t you think that’s ridiculous?” Evan paused. “Then I’ll transfer it back to you tomorrow. Is that enough?” The strain in his voice was obvious. His patience was gone. Stella

didn't want to hear another word from him. She reached for the door, ready to shut it. Evan caught the edge of the door with his hand. "Stella," he said, his tone no longer coaxing. "There's a limit to how far you can take this." "What limit?" Stella raised an eyebrow. Her emotions should have been spiraling. Instead, she was eerily calm. Even when she spoke about Summer, her voice was steady. "You and Summer are crossing lines, and you still expect me to stay within limits?" Evan's chest tightened. "Stop lumping me together with her," he snapped. "There's nothing between us." Stella looked at him coolly. "Steven is dead. Everyone in Harbor City thinks you've stepped in to take his place. "No one knows you're married. No one even knows your wife's name is Stella Rowan. "And you're telling me that has nothing to do with you?" Six months. In those six months after Steven's death, Evan and Summer had been seen together constantly. At events. In public. In private. There were even rumors that the twins were Evan's. Some people whispered that Steven's death itself had something to do with Evan. Hearing her mention those rumors, Evan stiffened. "You believe that nonsense?" Rumors? Stella didn't answer. She looked at him in silence. He felt the door pushing harder against his hand. His voice dropped, restrained. "She's sick. Depression. You know that." The word depression iced over Stella's gaze completely. "Right. Depression," she said flatly. "So your face is her medicine. Her personal sedative." What a convenient excuse. Every time Summer lost control, the first thing the family did was send Evan over to calm her down. Stella closed her eyes briefly. "Sign the divorce papers I'll have delivered tomorrow. "Then take care of her for the rest of your life." He could stay with her as long as he wanted. This twisted attachment made Stella sick to her core. Her indifference finally snapped the last thread of Evan's restraint. "Stella Rowan!" She opened her eyes, cold and resolute. "And tell Summer to prepare herself. "She'll be receiving a court summons soon."