

## Chapter 6

Just as Evan took a step toward Stella, something suddenly snagged at his foot. He looked down. Summer, who had been crying moments ago, had tumbled out of her wheelchair and collapsed onto the floor. She was unconscious. Someone nearby screamed, “Mrs. Wright, oh my God, there’s blood. So much blood!” The momentum in Evan’s body died instantly. The step he’d been about to take toward Stella paused, as if his legs were filled with lead. By the time Stella was lifted onto a gurney, her consciousness was already fading. Through her blurred vision, the last thing she saw was Evan holding Summer in his arms. Then everything went dark. ... Stella didn’t wake up again until the next morning. Jennifer had stayed by her side the entire night. When she saw Stella open her eyes, she let out a breath of relief. “Thank God. You’re finally awake. What a mess this turned into.” Stella’s lips moved slightly. Her throat was painfully dry. Jennifer hurried to hand her some water. “Evan came by earlier. Stayed about ten minutes.” Stella fell silent. Ten minutes. Just hearing the number made her chest sink. “He asked you to tell me not to sue Summer, didn’t he?” “You heard that?” Jennifer blurted out, stunned. Because it was true. Evan had told her—again—to pass along the message that Stella shouldn’t take Summer to court right now. The nerve of him. His wife hadn’t even woken up yet, and he was already speaking up for Summer. Stella lowered her gaze to the IV needle in the back of her hand. “No. I didn’t hear it. I could guess.” After the way he’d treated Summer these past six months, it wasn’t hard to imagine. And last night, the moment she mentioned suing, he hadn’t just tried to stop her. He’d panicked. “Don’t think about him,” Jennifer said, pushing the bowl of oatmeal porridge toward her. “Eat something.” She had seen firsthand how deeply in love they used to be. But now, even hearing Evan’s name made her chest feel tight. “You lost a lot of blood last night...” Jennifer’s voice caught halfway through the sentence. Even as an outsider, it hurt to say. Yet when Evan had come earlier, he hadn’t looked especially worried. He probably thought Stella just had a bad fever. So much care for his sister-in-law. So little understanding of his own wife’s condition. Stella let out a quiet, bitter laugh. “The fact that he could leave before I even woke up says enough.” “Enough,” Jennifer said firmly. “Don’t talk about Evan anymore. If you want a divorce, I’m on your side.” So what if the Wright family was the most powerful family in Harbor City? In the end, it had nothing to do with Stella. Jennifer added coldly, “Summer tore her stitches open when she fell. Going that far just to keep Evan to herself... she might as well have killed herself.” Jennifer had seen it all the night before. Evan had been about to go to Stella after she collapsed—right up until Summer fainted too. Passing out at the exact same moment? Jennifer was convinced it was deliberate. For a man, Summer was willing to gamble with her life. That kind of obsession was terrifying. ... Stella had suffered severe blood loss the night before. The doctor said she needed to stay in the hospital for at least a week. After helping Stella finish her meal, Jennifer stood up. “I’ll head back and grab you some clothes. Behave yourself, okay?” “Okay,” Stella said quietly. She was exhausted. Losing that much blood had left her light-headed and weak. As soon as Jennifer left, Stella closed her eyes again. Not long after, the door to the room opened. Then came the soft whir of wheels. Stella opened her eyes. Summer was at the doorway in a wheelchair. She tilted her head slightly. The person behind her immediately nodded. “Ma’am, I’ll wait outside.” Summer gave a soft hum. The attendant wheeled her in, then left, closing the door behind them. Summer smiled at Stella. “How are you feeling? I just spoke with your attending physician. He said you had severe bleeding last night. You must be very weak right now.” Her voice was gentle. But the smug satisfaction beneath it was impossible to miss. Stella said nothing. She only looked at Summer coldly. Meeting the dangerous chill in Stella’s eyes, Summer smiled even more brazenly. “So... after all this, do you still want to stay with Evan?” Stella lifted her gaze slightly. “The shove yesterday. That was deliberate, wasn’t it?” In that moment, Stella was almost certain. Two years ago. Yesterday. Both times had been intentional. Summer

folded her hands together. The smile on her lips faded, but she didn't answer the question directly. Her tone turned firm, commanding. "Divorce Evan. Name your terms." Stella fell silent. She looked at Summer's arrogant face. This was the woman the Wright family praised as the perfect daughter-in-law. Gentle. Proper. Well-mannered. What a joke. Stella let out a soft, mocking laugh. "You've been faking depression all this time. Does Evan know how you really feel about him?" "That's none of your concern," Summer replied coolly. Perhaps because Stella had grown up in an orphanage, Summer didn't even bother to hide her contempt. Stella asked quietly, "Yesterday aside... why did you come after me two years ago?" Back then, Steven was still alive. Had she already developed those thoughts about Evan? Summer lowered her gaze slightly. "That's not something you're entitled to ask." That answer said everything. Both two years ago and yesterday—Summer had acted on purpose. Even when Steven was alive, she had already set her sights on Evan. "You should stop resisting," Summer said flatly. "Someone with your background never should've married into the Wright family in the first place." That phrase "someone with your background" was pure mockery. To Summer, Stella was nothing more than an ant. Someone she could crush without consequences. Facing her arrogance, Stella smiled faintly. "Did Evan tell you?" "Tell me what?" "That I'll be taking back the exclusive rights to the Redcrest Valley project." At the words Redcrest Valley, Summer's expression froze. But only for a moment. Then she laughed dismissively. "You'll take it back? How? With your precious legal tools?" The arrogance was blatant. Stella looked at her coldly. "You really think your status gives you leverage?" Summer continued. "If I wanted you dead, it wouldn't leave a trace." "I'd advise you not to stir up trouble. It won't work on me. All you'll do is anger me—and that won't end well for you." Her words were a clear, icy threat. Her gaze turned razor-sharp. "Divorce Evan. Leave Harbor City. And don't ever come back." "This is the only kindness I'll ever show you." With that, Summer turned her wheelchair and headed for the door. Stella's lashes flickered. Her voice was calm and cold. "You're the first side piece I've ever seen this shameless." Most side pieces hid in the shadows. Summer had the audacity only someone with a powerful mother behind her could afford. Summer stopped. She turned back, a bloodthirsty smile curling on her lips. "What mistress?" she said softly. "In Harbor City, who even knows you exist as Evan Wright's wife?" The words cut deep. And Stella couldn't deny it. Just as Summer was about to say more, the attendant outside spoke up. "Ma'am, Mr. Wright has arrived." Summer glanced at Stella. In an instant, her entire expression changed. She wheeled herself quickly to the bedside and grabbed Stella's hand. At the exact moment the door opened, her voice turned tender and concerned. "Stella, I understand how badly you want a child. But false pregnancies can sometimes create real symptoms. "If you don't mind... I can let the babies spend more time with you in the future, okay?" The woman who had been ruthless moments ago now looked like the perfect, gentle sister-in-law. Stella narrowed her eyes slightly. "You want to be a mother that badly?" Summer said softly. "I don't mind letting the babies call you Mom." She wanted Evan for herself. And now she even wanted her children to call Stella their mother. Summer really did know exactly how to drive a knife straight into someone's chest. Stella didn't hold back. She yanked her hand free and swung. Smack. A sharp, cracking sound rang through the room, followed immediately by Summer's scream. "Aah—!" At that exact moment, Evan appeared at the doorway. He walked in just in time to see it. His face darkened instantly. Summer hadn't expected Stella to actually slap her. Anger surged in her chest but the second she saw Evan, she crushed it down hard. Her voice turned fragile and aggrieved. "Stella, what are you doing? I was just—" Smack. Smack. Before she could finish, Stella delivered two more slaps. She put everything she had into them. After three blows, Summer's head was ringing so badly she could barely stay upright. Evan's blood rushed straight to his head. "Stella, what the hell are you doing?" Summer clutched her face, tears pooling in her eyes as she looked at him. "Evan..." Evan rushed forward and grabbed Stella's wrist as she raised her hand again. "Have you lost your mind?" Stella wrenched her arm free. "Lost my mind? No. I'm just collecting interest early." The words had barely left her mouth when her other hand swung. She slapped Evan across the face. Then, in the same motion, backhanded Summer again. The hospital room exploded into raw, uncontrollable fury.

