

REBORN, REAWAKENED, REKINDLED

Chapter 2

“Hmm?” Neil, engrossed in his phone, didn’t even bother to look up. He was sporting black shirt and trousers, both of top-notch quality. His lean figure and perfect proportions made him look super handsome. Adding to that, his good-looking face, and well-defined features, he was basically every teenage girl’s dream guy. I pulled my gaze away, staring at the man opposite me, my voice a bit hoarse, “Let’s get a divorce.” Just as I finished speaking, I heard Neil’s sarcastic laugh. He tossed his phone onto the sofa, looking at me with that familiar cold gaze, asking, “Irene, what’s your game this time?” “I mean it.” I sat up straight, staring into those oppressive eyes. “It’s been five years, you weren’t going to fall for me anyway. We should let each other live better lives? In a month, there would be a huge business conference in Rosemont, and Neil would meet Bonnie there, who would be working part-time as a receptionist. He would fall for her at first sight, deciding to get her no matter what it took. Such a romantic tale, I was not going to play the pathetic role in their legendary love story anymore. What I wanted to do, could do, should do, all of it was done and dusted in my past life, and I got the final results. In this life, I wouldn’t let myself be the butt of the joke, pushing my family into an abyss. I decided to drop out of this farce before Neil and Bonnie met. On their rocky path of love, I would step aside for them. Seeing the seriousness in my eyes, Neil’s face darkened instantly. He always had a bad temper, and if anyone made him uncomfortable, he’d definitely lose it. “Haha, looks like I’m the plaything now, huh?” He chuckled, with coldness in his eyes. “Five years

ago, you were the one who insisted on marrying me, and now you're the one asking for a divorce. Irene, are you messing with me?" Five years ago, the Whitmore family and the Finch family were on good terms, so our elders arranged our marriage. Neil was stubborn, definitely not the obedient type, but the Whitmore family's grandfather was seriously ill, so he had no choice but to marry me.

For Neil, it was a humiliation. But he didn't have someone he deeply loved, was taking over the family business at the time, and needed a good partner, so he spent five years with me as husband and wife. I smiled sadly, "Do you really want to keep up this sham of a marriage?" "A sham marriage?" Neil pondered the phrase, then raised an eyebrow, sarcastically asking, "Oh, are you feeling lonely?" "No, I just..." I carefully chose my words to respond to him. Neil had already stood up and walked over to me. He bent over, his hands on either side of the couch, his chest forming a circle with his arms, trapping me inside. His voice was seductive, "If you're lonely, why didn't you come to me? Now you're considering a divorce, are you just too lustful?" Neil liked to smoke, and he always had a faint scent on him, a mix of his scent and the smell of tobacco. Of course, he never held me, I just secretly sniffed his coat. Now, that complex and alluring scent enveloped me. It should've made me excited and thrilled, and my face should've turned red from excitement, but in reality, I was just feeling suffocated. I was someone ready to leave; anything that could shake my resolve seemed ominous to me. "It's not because of that!" I tried to explain, but I was already used to the loneliness that had been going on for days and nights. "Really?" Neil straightened up. He wasn't really interested in me anyway, so the gesture of flirtation he just showed was only to embarrass me a bit. He wouldn't lose control over it. As a 27-year-old married woman, I emitted a gloomy aura, not a charming scent

like his. “Irene, I know today is our fifth wedding anniversary, but I don’t want to celebrate. If you want to use this as an excuse to ask for a divorce, I suggest you stop messing around.” Neil stood in front of me, looking down at me, his voice cold. བྱི རྒྱལ་ ཤལ་ རྒྱལ་ རྒྱ རྒྱ We never celebrated our wedding anniversary, so there’s no need to start this year.” I also stood up, looking up at Neil. “You should think about it, I’m probably not valuable to you anymore. You need freedom more than you need me, right?”

After saying that, I turned and went up to the second-floor bedroom without saying anything else. Downstairs, the sound of a door being slammed shut echoed, followed by the sound of a car engine outside the window. I knew it was Neil leaving, but this time I was calm. Then, my phone rang. was my friend Stella. “Rena, come out and play, let’s hit up Cielo Nocturno!” Stella’s loud voice immediately chased away my gloominess. She was the same age as me but still single. After getting married, I seldom went out to party. Stella would invite me out, and I would reject her most of the time, but she kept insisting. “Okay!” I agreed immediately, leaving Stella silent on the other end of the line. Today is your wedding anniversary with Neil, are you sure you want to go out?” Stella finally spoke again, sounding skeptical and surprised. I had turned down Stella’s invitations for four years straight using my wedding anniversary as an excuse. “Yes, even though today is our anniversary, doesn’t mean I can’t go out and have fun, I’ll be right there.” I answered Stella decisively, then hung up the phone. I opened the closet, a bunch of black, white, and grey clothes came into view, no blues, no purples. Each luxury brand of clothing offered all kinds of elegant design, yet I spent big bucks on the most boring styles. After ten minutes of selection, I chose a slightly lively V-neck strapless black dress. The silk-like touch, the elastic waistband of the black dress could highlight my slim waist. My smooth arms were bare,

revealing most of my back. I remembered this dress. I bought it specifically to attract Neil, but he didn't come home that entire month. The only thing that I wasn't satisfied with was my flat chest, which didn't quite match the charm of this dress. I could only comfort myself, "Just wear it, from now on, I'll eat more to console myself: After changing and putting on makeup, I drove a red Porsche straight to Cielo Nocturno. It was a nightclub in Rosemont, the name had a wild artistic vibe After parking I walked into Cielo Nocturno, finding Stella at the bar. Back in college, Stella, Alicia, Barbara, and I were hailed as the four female wonders of the music department Everyone anticipated

we would achieve great things after graduation, but it didn't quite pan out that way. I got hitched early, Stella turned into a club hopper, Alicia snagged a management gig at her family's company, and Barbara, the only one of us still on the music grind, was bouncing from one music competition to another, hellbent on becoming a pop star "Long time no seer Stella, with her bossy vibe, hopped off her bar stool and grabbed my hand, gushing. The other two were nodding like bobbleheads, because after I tied the knot, I might as well have dropped off the face of the earth I'd given up my social life for Neil. or your funeral." A few drinks in, Alicia said, a touch melancholic, "If you didn't surface this time, I'd start to wonder if I attended your wedding five years ago Aren't you supposed to be at home prepping a candlelit dinner? Stella asked curiously. She peered at my eyelids, even reaching out to touch my lashes. "Come here, let me see Has that jerk Neil been giving you the cold shoulder? Have you been crying?" Would you mind not messing up my fake lashes? I swatted Stella's hand away.