

No Second Baby, No You, Only Divorce

Chapter 11

It was eleven o'clock at night when Amanda finally saw off the last of the birthday guests. She collapsed onto the living room couch, exhausted, and grabbed her phone to scroll through social media-only to freeze when she saw a nine-photo carousel pop up on her feed. It was posted by Scarlett.

The photos showed the Theron family gathered around a birthday cake, laughing, eating, and smearing frosting on each other's faces. The warmth of the scene made Amanda's blood boil. Today was Richard's birthday-Scarlett's father-in-law-and she hadn't even bothered to show up, let alone send a card or a text. For five years, Scarlett had spent days slaving away in the kitchen to make Richard's birthday perfect. This year? She'd run off to her own family like the Stewart name meant nothing.

Amanda's temper flared. She stormed upstairs, and kicked open the door to Vincent's study without knocking. She slammed her phone down on his desk, her voice shrill with anger. "What the hell is this supposed to be?"

Vincent picked up the phone, scrolling through the photos with a frown.
“What’s the issue here?”

Amanda leaned over the desk, her face inches from his. “Today was your father’s birthday! She didn’t lift a finger-no dinner, no gift, nothing. Instead, she ran back to her parents’ house like she’s still a kid. She’s married to you, Vincent! Everything she has-her clothes, her car, her lifestyle-it all comes from the Stewart family. And this is how she repays us? By playing maid for her own family? Has she lost her mind?”

Vincent hated this kind of petty bickering. He pushed the phone back to her, his voice cold. “Don’t you go visit your sister every weekend? What’s the difference?” He genuinely didn’t see the problem-Scarlett had every right to spend time with her family.

Amanda’s face turned red. “That’s not the same! When you two got married, her family didn’t even show up! They practically disowned her! Now that we’re successful, they’re suddenly acting like they care? They just want to mooch off the Stewart name. You mark my words- they’re after something.”

Vincent sighed, rubbing his temples. He didn’t want to hear this. “Their family runs a small business. They don’t need our money. Mom, just drop it.”

Amanda opened her mouth to argue-What if they want a loan? What if they want connections? But the look on Vincent's face stopped her. His jaw was tight, his eyes sharp-clear signs he'd had enough. She zipped her lips, stormed out of the study, and slammed the door behind her.

Vincent was left alone, his work forgotten. He leaned back in his chair, staring at the ceiling. He'd just realized something-today was Scarlett's father's birthday too. In five years of

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marriage, he'd never known that. He didn't know her favorite color, or what she'd studied in college, or even why she'd become a pediatrician.

Their marriage had always been an accident. A one-night stand, a pregnancy, his grandfather's demand that he "do the right thing". He'd never cared enough to learn anything about her. To him, she'd always been just "Vanessa's mom"-a woman he was obligated to marry, but never someone he wanted to know.

He thought about Scarlett's post again-the way she'd smiled, the way her family had surrounded her. It was a side of her he'd never seen. But even then, he didn't feel guilty. Their marriage had never meant anything to him. With or without her, his life would go on the same.

Monday morning, Scarlett returned to the small-town school where she'd been volunteering. She'd barely set her medical bag down in the nurse's office when the principal, Marcos Everett, burst in, his face flushed with urgency.

"Dr. Theron, thank goodness you're here!" he said, mopping sweat from his forehead with a handkerchief. "I've been checking the clock every five minutes."

Scarlett tensed, grabbing her bag. "What's wrong? Did a kid

get

hurt?”

Marcus waved his hands, looking relieved. “No, no-nothing like that. We’re hosting a charity event this afternoon. A famous businessman from Rivergate is coming to donate to the school. The second-grade teacher’s on maternity leave, and we’re shorthanded. Could you supervise her class? Just walk them to the playground for the event, then bring them back. It’ll be quick, I promise.”

Scarlett let out a breath, relaxing. “That’s it? Sure, no problem.”

At two o’clock, the school gathered on the playground. Scarlett led her class of second-graders to their spot, then stood at the back of the group, watching as Principal Marcus took the stage. The autumn sun was warm, and orange leaves drifted down from the trees, crunching underfoot.

Marcus finished his speech, and the crowd applauded. Then, a tall figure walked out from behind the school building-dressed in a casual gray sweater and jeans, but still unmistakable.

Scarlett froze. It was Vincent.

She should have guessed. The “famous businessman from Rivergate” Marcus had mentioned- who else could it be? She felt a flicker of surprise, but nothing more. No hurt, no anger, no longing-just indifference.

Vincent stepped onto the stage, and Marcus handed him a microphone. He spoke briefly, his voice calm and steady, then announced his donation-thirty million dollars for new

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classrooms, scholarships for low-income students, and even small cash gifts for every child. Scarlett had to admit-setting aside their messy marriage, he was doing a good thing.