

After All the Hurt, She Chose Herself

Chapter 18

Flora burst into tears. “Lilith has suffered so much, and it's all Aria's fault!”

“Why does Lilith always have to give in to Aria?!”

“Even on your birthday, you went to celebrate with Aria first!”

“If you had just come back earlier that time, Lilith might have avoided another hospital stay!”

“Charles, where are you going?”

“I'm going for a smoke. Don't follow me; I don't want you breathing it in. Lilith will be fine. I'll save her.”

Charles walked to the smoking area and lit a cigarette.

He didn't smoke often, only when he was truly overwhelmed.

The hand holding the cigarette trembled slightly, but you wouldn't notice unless you looked closely.

But it was because of that subtle tremor that he could no longer hold a scalpel.

He exhaled a cloud of smoke and stubbed out the half-finished cigarette.

His hand had been injured protecting Aria during the incident involving Dawn's surgery, severing the nerves.

If he hadn't protected Aria back then...

Then he could still hold a scalpel. Maybe he could have even personally performed Flora's reconstructive surgery. Maybe he would have had the talent to become a genius like Dawn.

Maybe he would have had a chance to save Lilith...

Bone tumor. Lilith.

He thought of when Lilith first came to the Rowan family, severely malnourished and so timid when she spoke—not like Aria, who was bright and cheerful.

He hadn't liked Lilith back then.

Even though Lilith tried her best to please him, Charles remained indifferent to her.

She had cried, saying that besides him, no one else in the family liked her.

Charles felt a heavy pressure in his chest, making it hard to breathe.

Looking down from the window, Charles suddenly spotted a familiar figure.

Aria had just finished her discharge paperwork and was about to get in her car when someone blocked her path.

She looked up. It was Charles.

Aria was taken aback. "What are you doing here?"

Charles studied Aria. It was the first time he'd really looked at how she'd changed since he'd been back.

The Aria who used to follow at his heels, calling his name, now seemed hollowed out, as if she were just going through the motions.

Aria felt uneasy under his focused gaze.

Back when they were dating, Charles would stare at her just like this and say with a smile, "The more I look at you, Aria, the more I like you."

What was the point of dredging up the past now?

Aria turned to leave, but Charles suddenly grabbed her hand from behind.

"Have a child. Save Lilith."

"Name your price. I won't haggle."

Aria felt a sharp pain in her heart. Seven years ago, she never would have dreamed that Charles would try to force her to have a baby.

Aria yanked her hand back. "Charles, what do you think I am?!"

A walking uterus? An object to be manipulated whenever you please?

Charles's expression didn't change. "I don't care what you are, and I don't care who the father is. Just have a child, and I'll give you however much money you want..."

Before he could finish, Aria's hand flew up.