



Chapter 16

After Isabella left, Dominic sat alone at the dining table, staring blankly for a long time. At last, he picked up his knife and fork and began tearing into the steak in heavy bites. The more he ate, the more his emotions unraveled.

With a sudden roar, he swept everything off the table. His eyes burned red as he shouted, "Damn it!"

Unbearable pain surged through him. If he had not loved her so deeply, how could he have been driven to this?

The wine bottle shattered against the floor, and scarlet liquid pooled across the tiles.

Dominic froze for a moment before crouching down to clean up the mess. The glass cut easily into his fingers, yet he barely noticed. The sting in his hand was nothing compared to the weight in his chest.

He did not know how long he stayed like that.

At some point, the lights snapped on. Katherine stepped inside with Lillith asleep in her arms.

"What happened here?" she exclaimed.

The room was a wreck, food and wine scattered across the floor. Dominic sat smoking in the middle of it, blood dripping steadily from his fingers. At that moment, he looked like a man broken beyond repair.

Katherine frowned. She set the sleeping girl on the sofa and walked over. "What's wrong with you? Where's Bella?"

Her eyes narrowed as she caught sight of his hand. "You're hurt?"



At first, she assumed that the red staining his skin was wine. Up close, she saw the blood seeping from the cuts.

Dominic lowered his head, glanced at the wound, and shook it off.

"It's nothing," he said flatly.

A flicker crossed Katherine's eyes. She already guessed the truth: her foolish sister had once again abandoned her husband to run off to her so-called sworn brother.

She sighed. "The floor's filthy. Don't sit there. Let me help you with that cut."

Dominic only shook his head again, drawing silently on his cigarette.

"Stop smoking." Katherine plucked the half-burned cigarette from his hand, dropped it to the floor, and crushed it under her heel.

Then she hooked her arm beneath his, straining to lift him. "Up you get. Honestly, what did you grow up on? You don't look like you have much weight, yet you're heavy as stone."

Dominic was tall, and though not broad-shouldered, years in the home gym had built his frame into solid muscle. Beneath his clothes lay a chest like granite and sharply cut abs.

He blinked, his thoughts drifting. "Katherine, I can manage."

Shame pricked through his dark mood. He braced against the floor and pushed himself upright, then moved to the sofa. He studied his daughter's peaceful face, and his eyes filled with a tangle of emotion.

"Sit for a while," Katherine told him.



She fetched the first-aid kit and filled a basin with warm water. When she returned, she began tending his hand and spoke evenly. "My sister's always had her way, always pushed too hard. Don't take it too much to heart."

She kept the harsher truth to herself. 'Dominic, you love Bella. But love alone can't hold a marriage together. If you can't give her the life she wants, you can't pretend to live it.'

Katherine knew her sister well. With Isabella's beauty, suitors would never be scarce—heirs with money, men with power, men who could give her everything.

Dominic had none of that. No background, no wealth. Only an elderly grandfather in a poor village, blind in one eye. In every sense, he was as empty-handed as an orphan.

Katherine had never believed in this marriage. The fact that it had lasted seven years surprised her more than anyone.