



## Chapter 21

Alexander sobbed for a long moment before speaking, his voice hesitant and uncertain. "Bella... could you help me fulfill Mom's last wish?"

"What wish? Tell me."

"It's just... It's just..." He trailed off, stammering.

Isabella urged gently, "Alex, I'm your sister. There's nothing you can't tell me."

He drew a deep breath. "Mom's greatest wish... is to see me with a girlfriend. Bella, could you... pretend to be my girlfriend?"

The words shocked her, and she blurted, "Alex, what kind of joke is this?"

"No, it's not what you think! I'd never want you to betray your husband. It's just... Mom really likes you. She wants you to be my girlfriend—just for her. I was hoping you could pretend, only in front of her. If it makes her happy... maybe it will even help her condition." 

"Is that really it?" Isabella hesitated, unable to agree immediately. "Let's talk about this later."

"Alright." Alexander exhaled softly. "By the way... what happened tonight was my fault. Since tomorrow's the weekend, I can explain it to your husband. We're coworkers, and we celebrated your birthday together. He should understand."

Isabella was taken aback. "You'll explain to him?"

"Yes," Alexander said firmly. "I'm a man. I understand how he feels. It must have been a misunderstanding. If he loves you, he'll listen."



Isabella's heart twisted. Her husband's coldness earlier had cut deep, leaving her shaken. She had no other solution and whispered, "Alright. But don't get into a fight with him. His temper hasn't been good lately."

"Don't worry. I'll handle it. I'll visit him first thing tomorrow."

Isabella nodded. "Alright."

When the call ended, doubt weighed heavily on her. She couldn't tell if letting Alexander explain was right or wrong. Yet, why couldn't her husband simply get along with him? The thought made her even more restless.

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Meanwhile, Dominic wandered aimlessly through the streets. He lit a cigarette and smiled bitterly as he replayed the evening in his mind.

"Two birthdays, just days apart, and both times she chose her sworn brother over me..! He wondered, 'Isabella... did you ever stop to consider how much that hurts me?'

Maybe she had but didn't care. In her heart, the scales were tipping farther toward that sworn brother.

"They say the seventh year of marriage is the hardest. Looks like we won't survive it," he thought.

A roar of engines shattered the night. Three motorcycles screeched to a halt before him. The young woman leading the group removed her helmet and whistled. "Hey, handsome!"

"Get lost," Dominic rasped. His eyes were cold as he gave her a glance.

Her smile faltered. She climbed off the bike, and the four others—two



young men, two young women—followed, forming a wall around him.

The young woman in front sneered, "What did you just say, old man? Say it again if you dare."

Dominic stopped walking. Violence and rage flickered in his eyes.

"I said..." He enunciated each word deliberately. "Get lost!"