



### Chapter 3

Gasps filled the room as the table overturned, food and wine spilling across the floor. Plates shattered, dishes clattered, and several guests were left soaked and disheveled.

Isabella staggered back and collapsed onto the floor, trembling as she shouted, "What's gotten into you, Dominic? So what if I didn't come home for your birthday? You're a grown man. When did you become so petty?"

Alexander had been splashed as well, his suit stained with soup and wine. He hurried to Isabella's side, his voice full of concern. "Bella, are you alright?"

Bracing herself against a nearby cabinet, Isabella steadied her breathing and rose to her feet. She ignored Alexander completely, her gaze locked on Dominic.

Alexander turned on Dominic, his expression hardening. "You scared her half to death. Apologize to her right now!"

Dominic laughed coldly. "What, does it hurt to see her upset?"

Alexander snorted. "Of course it hurts. She's my sister. Why wouldn't I care? You're the one with the filthy mind. You twist everything into something dirty."

"Filthy?" Dominic's pupils narrowed. Without another word, he strode forward and slapped Alexander's face.

The sound echoed.

Alexander was stunned. He couldn't believe that Dominic had dared to hit



him.

The rest of the guests stared in silence.

Dominic's fury flared, his eyes blazing red. That single slap was only the beginning. He lunged at Alexander with fists and kicks, each blow fueled by rage.

The memory of the crossed-arm toast, the moment Alexander placed food on Isabella's plate, the way they spoke to each other—it was intimate, ambiguous. Every detail fanned the flames consuming him.

"Ahh!" Alexander screamed.

Dominic's tall, broad frame and raw strength left the delicate young man defenseless. Alexander curled on the floor and cried out in pain, powerless to resist.

The room erupted with shouts.

Isabella stood frozen for a few seconds before rushing forward. She wrapped her arms around Dominic's waist and pulled with all her strength. "Stop it! Please, stop!"

Only after a long struggle did Dominic finally relent. Alexander lay bloodied and groaning.

Isabella flung herself between them and shielded Alexander with her body as she glared at her husband and growled, "Are you insane? Haven't you made enough of a spectacle?"

She could not fathom it. How could he explode like this, just because she hadn't come home for his birthday?



Dominic gritted his teeth. "Who's making a spectacle, Isabella? If you don't want this marriage, say it. Stop parading this filth around. What's the matter? You can't breathe unless you humiliate me and cheat behind my back?"

His words stunned her. It took a moment before she screamed in return, "Dominic! You bastard! What are you saying? When have I ever betrayed you? Alex is like a brother to me. Brother! You'd better apologize, or I'll never forgive you!"

"Brother?" Dominic sneered. He pulled out his phone, opened a photo, and tossed it at her feet.

"Sworn brother, right? Stop kidding yourself." His voice dropped low, thick with contempt.

A jolt shot through Isabella. She bent down, picked up the phone, and her face went pale. A startled cry left her lips as the phone slipped from her grasp and clattered to the floor.

Dominic's cold laugh sliced through the silence. "What now? Drinking crossed-arm toasts with your sworn brother? If I hadn't shown up tonight, what would've come next? Would you be in bed with him?"

Isabella's face drained of color, her lips trembling. "Dom... this isn't what it looks like. Please, let me explain—"

"Explain, my ass!" Dominic jabbed a finger at Alexander. "If you want to keep up this little charade of pretend siblings, fine. But don't take me for a fool."

"I—I didn't!" Isabella clutched at his shirt, desperate to explain.

But Dominic no longer cared to listen. Every moment from the evening—



the toast, the glances, the twisting pain in his chest—fed his anger. He scoffed, shook off her hand, and stormed out.

Isabella panicked and moved to follow him.

Then Alexander's broken voice rose from the floor. "Bella... it hurts. L... I can't see. I can't see anything..."

She froze. Blood smeared his eyes, and his face was twisted in agony.

Isabella's expression wavered. At last she bit her lip and said, "I'll take you to the hospital."

She ordered two male employees to lift him up. Just as they were about to leave, Isabella remembered the phone. She stooped to retrieve it, then fixed her gaze on a petite young woman in the crowd.

Her voice turned cold. "Did you post this video, Vivian?"

Vivian Hale jolted, panic flooding her face. She was new to the company and hadn't realized Isabella had a husband. "Ms. Sinclair, I didn't know you were married—"

Isabella cut her off, "No need to explain. You're fired. Report to HR tomorrow and sign your termination papers."

Vivian's face collapsed in despair. "Ms. Sinclair, please..."

Isabella ignored her. She gave one last indifferent glance before walking out with Alexander.

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Dominic sat in his car downstairs, smoking in silence. When Isabella



never appeared, he shook his head, started the engine, and drove home.

'She has chosen Alexander again. No, even that isn't right. If a choice between me and another man exists at all, then I've already lost.' A bitter smile tugged at his lips. 'Seven years of marriage — is it truly ending?'

He had never imagined divorce with Isabella, but it seemed inevitable now. The only question was Lilith. He was a man and could walk away. But for the girl, what kind of scar would a divorce leave?

He let out a long, weary sigh.

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Dominic could not remember how he made it home. When he opened the door, the apartment lay in silence. He pushed open the door to Lilith's room and saw Katherine curled on the bed, holding Lilith as they slept. Their breathing was soft and even.

Half the blanket had slipped to the floor, leaving most of Katherine's body uncovered. Her silk camisole had ridden up, the pale curve of her hip catching the dim light.

Dominic hesitated, then crossed the room quietly. He lifted the blanket and drew it over her before stepping out and closing the door.

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Past midnight, the front door opened. Isabella slipped inside, her face drawn with exhaustion. The sharp stench of smoke hit her nose and sent her into a coughing fit.

The lights were off, but she could just make out a man's silhouette on the sofa.

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Her chest tightened, yet she drew a steady breath and said softly, "Honey ... happy birthday."

She flicked on the light and saw the coffee table's ashtray overflowing with cigarette butts.

"Save it. My birthday's already over." Dominic's voice was low, his expression unreadable.



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