

After I Heard My Stepbrother's Cruel Revenge Plan c 5

I walked out of the columbarium into gray afternoon light. Found a bench twenty meters away. Sat down with the container still in my hands.

I pulled out my phone. Called my mother.

She answered on the second ring. "Sweetheart?"

"I'm leaving next week," I said.

My voice was steady. Flat. Like I was reading from a script.

Silence on the other end.

"Don't ask me why yet," I continued. "I'll explain everything from London."

More silence. Then a breath.

"I'll call Rosa," she said quietly.

"Thank you."

I hung up. Sat on the bench until the light changed. Until my hands stopped shaking.

Then I took the subway home.

That night, the penthouse was still empty. I went to my room. Pulled the last box from my closet. Packed the few remaining things I needed. Books. The watch my father gave me. A framed photo of him from before he got sick.

I sealed the box. Carried it downstairs. Drove to the storage unit near JFK.

When I got back, it was past midnight. I sat at my desk. Opened my laptop.

I'd been composing the letter in my head for weeks. Now I had to write it.

I started with the date. Then his name.

No greeting. No preamble.

Just the truth.

You believed my mother destroyed your family. You were wrong.

I wrote for two hours. Deleted half of it. Started again.

I didn't tell him I'd overheard him with Daniel. Didn't tell him about the five years I'd spent loving him while he collected debts. That wasn't the point.

The point was the evidence.

I saved the document. Closed my laptop. Went to bed.

I didn't sleep.

The next evening, I went to my mother's study. She kept files in the cabinet behind her desk. Organized by year. I found what I needed in the folder marked 2008.

Divorce correspondence. Montgomery v. Montgomery. Letters from attorneys. Financial settlements. A timeline.

I spread them on the floor. Read through every page.

It was all there. Mrs. Montgomery had initiated the dissolution. Filed first. Left for a senior partner at her firm named Richard Castellano. The separation agreement was signed three months before my mother even met Kayden's father.

My mother appeared in the doorway. Looked at the papers on the floor.

"You knew," I said.

She nodded slowly. "I kept them because I thought—" She stopped. "I don't know what I thought."

I gathered the documents carefully. "I need to make copies."

"Take the originals," she said. "I don't need them anymore."

I stood. Held the folder against my chest. "Thank you."

She touched my face. Just once. Then she left me alone.

I spent the next two nights assembling everything. I made a timeline. Cross-referenced dates. Attached copies of the legal filings. Bank statements showing when Mrs. Montgomery opened a joint account with Castellano. Emails between attorneys.

Irrefutable.

On the third night, I printed the letter. Read it once. Folded it. Slid it into an envelope with the documents.

I sealed it. Wrote nothing on the outside.

I set it on my desk. Next to the bank card I'd ordered two weeks ago. Thirty million dollars. Every cent I could calculate that the Montgomery family had spent on me over five years. Tuition. Rent before I moved into the penthouse. The car Kayden bought me that I never drove. Everything.

I looked at both items for a long time.

Then I turned off the light and went to bed.

I woke up at four a.m. on the day of my flight. The penthouse was silent.

I dressed in the dark. Jeans. Sweater. Comfortable shoes. I pulled my hair back. Checked my passport one more time.

My suitcase was by the door. Packed for three days. One bag. Everything else was in storage or didn't matter.

I picked up the bank card and the envelope from my desk. Walked to the bathroom. Opened the door that connected my room to Kayden's.

I hadn't been through this door in months. Not since the night I overheard him.

His room was dark. I could hear him breathing. Deep. Even. Asleep.

I crossed to his nightstand. Set down the card. Set down the envelope.

I didn't look at him. Didn't let myself.

I walked back through the bathroom. Closed the door behind me. Locked it from my side.

I picked up my suitcase. Took one last look at my room. The desk where I'd edited a thousand photos. The window where I used to wait for him. The bed where I'd believed every lie.

Then I walked out.

Down the hall. Into the elevator. Forty-three floors.

The lobby was empty. The doorman nodded as I passed. I didn't say goodbye.

The taxi was waiting outside. I gave the driver the address. JFK. Terminal Seven.

As we pulled away from the curb, I didn't look back. Didn't watch the building disappear. Didn't let myself feel anything.

Manhattan blurred past the window. Gray and gold in the early light.

I closed my eyes.

By the time I opened them again, we were on the expressway. The city was already behind me.

I pulled out my phone. Opened my banking app one last time.

Balance: \$847,000.

Enough for tuition. Enough for rent. Enough to start over.

I closed the app. Turned off my phone. Put it in my pocket.

The plane was boarding in two hours.

I was done.