

# After the Crash

Anna Smith

## Chapter 1

When I found out, my world stopped.

I remember clutching the edge of the bed before everything went black.

They said I fainted from shock.

Luca Moretti — my husband, the man everyone called the golden heir of the Mafia — dropped a billion-dollar deal and flew home overnight.

He didn't sleep for two days, sitting by my bedside, his face pale with fear.

When I finally opened my eyes, he was right there.

"Valeria," he whispered, pressing my palm to his cheek. "You scared me half to death."

This was the same man who'd once stared down a loaded gun without flinching, now trembling because I'd collapsed.

Looking into his eyes — those eyes I used to trust more than anything — hurt more than anything my body had felt.

Love like that couldn't be faked.

And yet, I couldn't stop wondering... did he ever look at her that way too?

Bianca Rizzo.

His childhood friend.

The woman who had given birth to his twins.

If I hadn't seen the proof with my own eyes — the photos, the DNA report — I would have never believed it. The world saw Luca as perfect.

But perfection hides things. And his secret had been breathing beside another woman for an entire year.

I turned my face away and let the tears soak into the pillow.

My hand drifted to my stomach, trembling.

After years of failed IVF treatments, I was finally pregnant.

And all I could do was cry.

Luca pulled me into his arms, his voice low and tender.

"What's wrong, sweetheart? Who upset you? Tell me and I'll fix it."

But then I caught a faint scent on his skin — expensive perfume I didn't wear, mixed with the powdery sweetness of baby formula.

My stomach twisted. I shoved him away and stumbled toward the bathroom, retching.

He rushed after me, holding my hair, wiping my face.

He hated messes. He hated the smell of sickness.

And yet there he was, on his knees, whispering, "It's okay. I've got you."

It almost broke me again — because in that moment, he was the man I fell in love with.

The one who used to walk through fire for me.

The one I thought I could never live without.

I almost forgave him.

I almost convinced myself that if he left Bianca, we could go back to what we were — start over, raise our baby together, pretend the world hadn't already ended.

I opened my mouth to tell him,

"Luca, I—"

But his phone rang.

He kissed my forehead, said something about business, and walked out the door.

Thirty minutes later, Bianca sent me a photo.

Luca was holding the twins, his lips pressed to their foreheads.

The smile on his face wasn't guilt — it was peace.

That photo destroyed the last bit of hope I had left.

When I left the hospital, I didn't go home.

I went straight to Clara, my oldest friend — the only person I could still trust.

"Help me," I said. "I need you to fake a plane crash."

She stared at me in horror, but I didn't blink.

Because I knew Luca.

He would never let me go.

And if I wanted to protect my baby, I had to disappear.

That night, I started packing.

I opened the wardrobe and took out every shirt I'd ever sewn for him.

I cut them into pieces and threw them away.

The diamonds he gave me — I handed them to the housekeepers.

And the sixteen photo albums we'd made over the years, promising to look at them together when we were old — I fed them one by one into the fireplace.

The pages curled, blackened, and turned to ash.

At midnight, my phone buzzed.

Clara: Everything's ready. Two days from now, you vanish.



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