

Chapter 5 You've Changed

Ashley cast a quick glance at Kristian and, with an unmistakable air of intimacy, said, "I'll listen to Kristian."

Freya, her striking eyes lifting slightly, turned to Kristian. "Darling, can I take a look?"

Kristian noted the artificial warmth in her voice but remained silent. Without a word, he picked up the phone from the table and pulled up a conversation before handing it over.

Freya took the phone, scanning the chat history.

A contact labeled "Mrs. Shaw" had sent a message. "Help me get rid of Ashley, I'll settle your debts and throw in an extra million."

"How do I know you'll keep your promise?" Ashley's attacker responded.

"I'm Kristian Shaw's wife. A million is nothing to me," came the reply from "Mrs. Shaw".

The attacker responded cautiously, "I'll trust you this once. But if you go back on your word, I'm not afraid of making a scene at Shaw Group! Send me her photo."

Moments later, "Mrs. Shaw" sent an image, followed by a warning. "Don't leave any traces."

Freya finished reading, her expression unreadable. She raised an eyebrow slightly and asked, "That's it?"

Kristian studied her face, searching for any flicker of panic—but found none. "That's all."

"It wasn't me." Freya handed back the phone, her voice calm as she reasoned, "With your resources, it shouldn't be difficult to track down who owns this account."

"The account is new. No user identity verification," Kristian replied, his voice edged with cold detachment.

"Then trace the login IP," Freya suggested effortlessly.

Kristian's gaze lingered on her, his expression darkening slightly.

In all the years he had known her, intelligence had never been her defining trait.

She had always relied on him to solve her problems.

Yet, now she was analyzing the situation with a sharpness he hadn't expected.

"You're not about to tell me the IP was hidden, are you?" Freya asked when his silence stretched a little too long.

Kristian didn't answer her directly. Instead, he issued an order. "Gerard, have the tech department trace all login IPs linked to this account."

"Understood," Gerard responded promptly, taking the phone and swiftly exiting the room, eager to avoid being caught between Kristian and Freya's tension.

Kristian's gaze remained fixed on her. "Are you absolutely sure it wasn't you?" His voice was cool, unreadable.

From the moment he had seen the messages, he had been certain Freya was responsible. Everything about her lately had contradicted his previous impression of her.

She had never cared much about money before, yet during the divorce, she had demanded an exorbitant sum.

She had always been gentle and unassuming, but suddenly, she had become sharp and unrelenting.

Had her easygoing nature just been an illusion all along? 

Freya, unfazed, folded her arms. "Instead of wasting time questioning me, you might want to figure out how the driver got Miss Bradley's schedule today," she pointed out coolly.

Kristian narrowed his eyes slightly but said nothing.

Before he could respond, she added, "Oh, and one more thing."

"What is it?" he asked.

"In cases like this, the logical first step would be to call the police," she remarked, holding his gaze. "Not to come after someone irrelevant like me."

Kristian's expression darkened.

Strangely enough, the moment he learned Freya was involved, his first instinct had been to confront her—not to report it to the authorities.

For a moment, silence stretched between them, an unspoken tension lingering in the air.

Kristian found himself locked in her gaze. Her eyes—once perpetually warm—blinked slowly, her long lashes fluttering like butterfly wings.

Neither of them looked away. The moment broke when Ashley's soft voice pulled Kristian back to the present.

"Kristian," she murmured.

His head turned slightly. "What is it?"

Ashley hesitated for a beat before saying, "I want to rest now."

It was a simple request, but the implication was clear—she wanted them gone.

Freya, however, had no intention of leaving just yet. A subtle smile played at her lips as she took a step closer to the bed. "Before you rest, shouldn't you apologize to me?"

"What?" Ashley's eyes widened in feigned confusion.

Kristian caught Freya's implication instantly. His voice dropped to a warning growl. "Freya."

She remained unshaken, her tone glacial. "I won't blame you for seducing my husband—a relationship takes two. But let's address your false accusation first."

"I'm sorry!" Ashley's apology tumbled out, saccharine with remorse. Her fingers twisted the sheets. "When I saw 'Mrs. Shaw', I just... assumed it was you."

"Oh?" Freya's smile sharpened. "I assumed you staged this 'accident' because you couldn't bear the thought of Kristian shopping with me."

"I didn't!" Ashley's protest was reflexive.

"Freya." Kristian's voice simmered with anger.

She shrugged, deliberately casual. "Can't take a joke?"

"You call this a joke?" He stepped closer, shielding Ashley with his body. "Target her again, and you'll deal with me."

Freya laughed—a sound like shattering ice. "You rage over a joke, yet when she accused me of attempted murder, where was this fury for me?"

Kristian went still. His eyes turned arctic.

"Kristian Shaw." She said his name like a verdict.

Something in his chest lurched.

He clenched his jaw against the feeling.

"Need I remind you?" Her voice quivered—just once—before steel returned. "We're still married." Pride alone choked back the words—"Your defense of her cuts deeper than you know."

"Kristian," Ashley interjected, playing peacemaker. "This is my fault. Don't be angry with her."

Freya nearly rolled her eyes. She'd ignored the woman's petty games, but patience had limits.

"Since when do outsiders meddle in family matters?" Her tone could frost glass.

"I just hate seeing you fight."

"We're fighting," Freya said slowly, "because of you."

"I... I'm sorry," Ashley's whisper was a masterclass in faux penitence.

"If apologies sufficed, we wouldn't need courts."

"Enough." Kristian seized Freya's wrist—this time, his grip lacked its earlier brutality. "With me. Now."

She didn't resist.

Snatching her purse, she let him haul her into the corridor.

At the hallway's end, he released her, his mask of indifference back in place. "What do you want?"

"To call her out."

Silence.

"To name her what she is—a homewrecker."

"She's not," he snapped.

"Then am I?"

"No."

"Then who is?" Freya asked again.

The question hung between them like a blade.

Kristian looked away first. He wanted to explain, but her face—all scorn, her once-warm eyes now flint—stopped him. "You've changed," he finally said.