

Chapter 13

[Vivienne]

When I reach the hospital, to which Caden texted me the address, I turn to Marcus.

"It won't take long. Will you be alright waiting here for a while?"

He happily nods. "Of course, Ms. Richardson. Worry not. Just give me a call whenever you want me to bring the car."

"Thanks, Marcus."

I turn to the automatic doors and walk straight to the elevators. Caden had mentioned the floor and room number in the text, so I simply follow his instructions. I just hope everything is alright. I tried calling him on the way to ask for more details about the urgent matter, but he never picked up.

Typical Caden, of course—always hellbent on ignoring me.

The elevator doors open, and I head down the hallway.

I come to a slow halt, however, when the sight that makes me absolutely sick comes into view. I don't think there's anything worse than seeing your husband in the arms of another woman.

My heart breaks for the millionth time, while unshed tears burn my eyes.

I wish I could look away, but I can't. I want to see this. I want to

memorize every single detail of this moment so that I never forget. I want to engrave this picture in my mind so that I never make the same mistake again.

I watch him wrap his arm around her, caressing her hair while she cries on his chest. She says something to him, and he nods, as if agreeing to whatever she said. They pull away, and she wipes her tears.

It's only then that his eyes land on me.

I don't know what he sees in my expression, but the moment he notices me standing there, he frowns and excuses himself from Sasha.

I try to put up a brave façade when he approaches me.

"Thank God you're here. Come on," he says, grabbing my hand and dragging me to where Sasha stands. But she's not alone anymore. Caden's mom appears out of nowhere, and the way the two of them are looking at me makes me a little apprehensive.

"Mom, you can leave now. I'll ask—"

"No!" His mom cuts him off, pointing an accusatory finger at me. "Tell her to leave immediately. Why did you even call her? I told you, we don't need anyone else meddling in our family affairs. Didn't you hear anything the doctor said? Your dad needs rest, and he needs to be kept stress-free. Imagine the harm it could cause if he sees her here, disrupting his recovery. How will he relax then, knowing she's around, bringing more chaos into our lives?"

Caden's fingers tighten around my wrist. I almost hiss in pain.

"Stop overreacting, Mom. Everything will be fine."

His mom scoffs, crossing her arms against her chest. "I am overreacting? Me? Caden, your dad just had a heart attack. He's lying in that room fighting for his life, and you call the person who caused all of this mess?"

Mr Lawrence had a heart attack? Why didn't he tell me that instead?

But wait a minute. Did she just blame me for this? How can she even ...?

Caden doesn't say anything, too busy snapping my wrist in two.

His mom continues, though. "Look at her. Standing there looking all pretty when your dad is dying. Doesn't she have any shame at all? What did her parents even teach her? They must be ashamed of themselves too. I can't believe someone could be so heartless and self-absorbed in a moment like this. It's like she doesn't have a single ounce of decency or compassion. Her parents must be mortified, raising a daughter who cares more about her appearance than her own family's suffering. How disgraceful. How utterly despicable."

I don't know whether it's because I'm tired of being blamed for everything or whether it's because I am fed up with being treated like I mean nothing. All I know is that I snap.

"Are you done?" I say, yanking my hand away from Caden's grip and massaging it.

Mrs. Lawrence looks at me, eyes wide. "Excuse me? How dare you talk to me like that?"

"Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot you were the Queen of England."

She looks at me as if I've lost my mind. She opens her mouth to say something when Caden steps forward, holding me back.

"Vivienne!" he growls, his heated gaze stabbing the side of my face. "Stop it!"

"Oh my God, Vivienne! How could you talk to Mrs. Lawrence like that?" Sasha chimes in, her annoying voice making my ears hurt. "She's older than you. She's your husband's mother. Show some respect. Or did you forget everything your parents taught you? I can't believe you have the nerve to speak disrespectfully to her. It's disgraceful. She's been through so much; the least you could do is show kindness and consideration. Clearly, you have no idea what it means to honor your elders or support your family in times of need. Your parents must be so disappointed in the person you've become. It's embarrassing, really."

"Don't you dare drag my parents into this," I snap, having enough of her act. "You have no idea what I've been through or how hard I've tried to fit into this family. I've been patient, I've been respectful, but enough is enough. I won't stand here and be blamed for things that aren't my fault."

Caden's grip tightens on my arm, his face a mask of fury. "Vivienne, this isn't the time or place."

"Why don't you tell her to shut up then? This is our family matter. What right does she have to talk to me like that?"

Caden's mom gasps. "How dare you? You think you have the right to make demands now? My husband almost died today, and yet all you care about is yourself."

"Enough!" Caden snaps, his voice laced with anger. "That's enough! All of you!"

Sasha snuffles, her eyes brimming with tears. "Caden, why are you defending her? She insulted your mom. Can't you see how selfish and immature she is? How can you defend her when she spoke to your mom like that? Do you really want that kind of person as your wife?"

"Sasha, stop it. Just... just go home."

"Why should she go home? Your dad likes her. He considers her part of the family. She has every right to be here. If there's someone who should leave, it's your ungrateful wife."

But Caden is done, the look on his face indicating that he has reached his limit.

He shakes his head. "This is stupid. All of you are acting childish. Dad is in that room fighting for his life, and all of you want to bicker? You know what? No one stays here. All of you, get out of here. Now!"