

## Setting Myself Free

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### Chapter 1

Today was my mother's funeral, and the weight of being truly alone pressed heavily on my shoulders.

My father had passed away years ago, and my mother had joined him after her battle with illness. Despite the emptiness in my heart, I maintained a brave face, nodding and thanking all the friends and relatives who had come to pay their respects.

The thought that no one would be left to call me home for the holidays made my heart ache. At least I still had my loving husband, Caleb Golding—or so I thought.

I looked around for him, puzzled by his absence at such a crucial moment. We still had important funeral proceedings to attend together, so I went searching for him.

As I turned a corner, I heard hushed voices and flirtatious giggles. I would have walked away, but the conversation that followed stopped me in my tracks.

A woman's voice whispered, "Baby, you should go back. What if your wife finds us?"

"Don't worry. She's too busy to come this way."

"Stop it! We shouldn't..."

My mind instantly went black. I recognized the voice instantly—it was Caleb's. I silently prayed I was mistaken as I took hesitant steps toward the voices, only to have my worst fears confirmed.

Caleb was embracing a woman in a fitted blazer and pencil skirt. They were kissing passionately, his hands roaming her body, and her blouse was halfway unbuttoned.

They were utterly absorbed in each other, not even noticing my presence.

"Caleb, what are you doing?" I demanded, my voice trembling with hurt and anger.

The woman let out a startled scream and quickly pushed Caleb away, fumbling to fix her clothes. Caleb, looking panicked, avoided meeting my eyes.

"Sweetheart, it's not what it looks like—" he stammered.

I cut him off, my voice shaking. "Not what it looks like? Caleb, it's my mom's funeral, and you're sneaking around with another woman? Do you have no shame?"

Caleb hurriedly adjusted his clothes. "You've got it all wrong. Sheena and I... It's not what you think," he said as he fumbled for words.

Hearing the name—Sheena—made me pause. It clicked—she was the salesgirl, Sheena Miller, from the boutique Caleb often visited to buy me handbags.

My stomach churned at the thought that it was someone so familiar.

"Wrong? Caleb, I'm not blind!" I snapped, my voice rising. "If I hadn't come just now, were you planning to take it further? You're disgusting!"

My emotions were a storm of grief, betrayal, and rage, threatening to overwhelm me. Caleb tried to approach me with his usual placating manner, reaching for my hands to pull me close, but I shoved him away.

He looked surprised when his usual method of smoothing things did not work.

"Honey, I swear it's not what you think. Sheena came to pay her respects. She got something in her eye, and I was helping her. She meant well. You're jumping to conclusions."

I almost laughed at his pathetic excuse. However, considering the day and the guests present, I decided to handle it with as much dignity as possible.

"Tell her to leave. I won't make a scene at my mother's funeral," I said coldly.

Suddenly, Caleb became irritated and snapped, "I've explained everything. Why are you still making this an issue? Sheena came all this way. How would this look to her colleagues if you sent her away?"

I gave a bitter laugh. I could not believe that Caleb was worried about her reputation while disregarding how that would affect mine.

"Are you leaving or not?" I directed my final warning at Sheena.

Sheena put on an act of vulnerability, clutching Caleb's wrist. Her voice was soft and pitiful as she murmured, "It's okay, Caleb. I'll leave if it makes her feel better. I don't want to cause any trouble between you two."