

Chapter 2

I drifted along behind him, floating like a restless ghost all the way to the hospital, until I found myself in Alice's ward.

There she was, lying on the hospital bed, her face pale and pitiful, as though she were the very picture of tragedy. But looking at her only brought a fresh wave of agony as I thought of my own child—a child fully formed, yet never given the chance to see this world.

I glared at Alice and Grayson with a rage so fierce it burned through my spectral being. In that moment, I wished I could transform into a vengeful spirit and drag these two wretched souls to the grave to accompany my child.

"Grayson, do you blame me?" Alice murmured, her voice soft, her eyes glistening with unshed tears. "If it weren't for me, you could've saved Belle first."

"Don't be ridiculous," Grayson replied, cradling her as though she were made of glass. He gently patted her back, his voice tender as a spring breeze. "She's always been strong. I've already sent people to rescue her. A little hardship won't kill her."

"But she is your wife," Alice hesitated, her voice trembling. "Even if she had made a mistake..."

"Mistakes should be punished," Grayson interrupted coldly. His words were sharp, slicing through me like a blade.

Grayson. Do you even know? This punishment you speak of—it has already cost me my life. And the life of our child.

Grayson and I had grown up together. We were childhood sweethearts, tied by an old-fashioned betrothal made when we were kids. Alice came to the Blackwood family when she was six years old, and from that moment on, Grayson treated her better than any blood sibling could.

I had loved him for as long as I could remember. But Grayson was always distant. He had rejected my advances more than once.

There were times I suspected he harbored feelings for Alice. Yet, when I confronted him, he brushed it off, saying she was nothing more than a sister to him.

Then Alice went abroad. That night, Grayson drank too much and kissed me, pinning me against the wall in a haze of liquor and desperation.

I was too overwhelmed to resist, my heart soaring as though I'd won the lottery.

The next day, his face was grim, but he told me he'd take responsibility.

And so, he married me. No proposal, no wedding photos, no honeymoon, not even a proper confession of love.

I knew he didn't love me. He married me because he felt obligated after that one drunken mistake.

But I couldn't stop myself from falling deeper for him. I thought marriage would change things. That someday, he'd love me the way I loved him.

It never happened.

After the wedding, he was neither warm nor cold—just indifferent. Even our physical intimacy was mechanical, like an obligation he had to fulfill. Three times a week, no more, no less.

Then, in our second year of marriage, Alice returned from abroad. Pregnant. She refused to say who the father was.

During that time, Grayson came home every day—every single day. He'd even cook dinner just to make sure Alice ate well.

Jealousy consumed me. I couldn't help myself. I argued with him, accused him, let my anger spill over into bitter, reckless words.

"If someone didn't know better, they'd think she was your wife, not your sister!" I snapped. "Or are you so worried about her because the child she's carrying is yours?"

That was the first time Grayson hit me.

The slap came out of nowhere, leaving me stunned and seething with fury.

I didn't notice Alice standing at the doorway, watching.

I stormed off, crying, determined to go back to my parents' house. Alice stopped me at the door.

"Belle," she said, her voice shaking with hurt, "I didn't know you thought of me as such a shameless person. I still have some dignity—I would never do something so immoral. I'll leave tomorrow. I'll go abroad again."

After that, Grayson and I didn't speak for half a month. Or rather, he froze me out completely.

In the end, Alice didn't leave. I cooled off and felt guilty, eventually apologizing to her.

But she never forgot.

She harbored that grudge until one fateful day when she grabbed my hand and threw herself down the stairs.

And just like that, her child was gone.