



## Chapter 3 Letting Go

Lilliana's eyes flickered with shadowy intent, her lips curling into a faint smile.

She wasn't foolish enough to show her cards now, so she waved it off with an effortless excuse. "During your two-year marriage, she has lived quietly in the shadows as a mere housewife, disconnected from your world. When you're assertive, would she dare to say a word?"

Joshua pursed his lips into a hard line.

During the past two years, Alicia had indeed done everything for him—given him support and solace.

She had loved him fiercely, but at the end of it all, what value did love truly hold?

Against all odds, he had clawed his way to the top, and he'd finally grasped the power he craved.

That success, however, hadn't come easy, and it wasn't love that secured his position—it was alliances with the powerful.

The prestige of the Green family daughter, that title alone, was worth far more than Alicia's devoted love.

As these thoughts plagued his mind, Lilliana suddenly pressed her luscious, red lips against his. "Joshua," she purred, her voice like velvet, "congratulations on escaping the grind. Shall we celebrate?"

For a moment, Joshua's gaze flickered down to her, but Alicia's indifferent face suddenly flashed before his eyes.

Since leaving the house earlier, Alicia hadn't once called him to ask for his whereabouts.

Before, if he had been upset with her, she would've called him in a panic.



A sharp, inexplicable irritation surged within him. Without thinking, he pushed Lilliana back, his voice gruff. "You're only a few weeks' pregnant. Be careful."

Lilliana, sharp as ever, sensed he was distracted. "Joshua, what's wrong?" she asked gently. "Don't you want to get divorced?"

Joshua's response was instant. "Of course I want to divorce her."

Her eyes narrowed as she studied him. "Then why don't you seem very happy?"

Joshua offered a quick excuse, his voice steady but distant. "My father's condition has worsened. He doesn't have much time left, and Caden returned last night. He's likely here to claim his inheritance. I need to figure out how to handle him."

Lilliana blinked, momentarily thrown. "Caden? Your brother from your father's first marriage? He doesn't even carry the Yates name anymore. What right does he have to fight you for the inheritance?"

Joshua's expression darkened.

It was true—but at the end of the day, he was still the son of a home-wrecker.

All these years of relentless effort had not only been to carve out a name for himself in the Yates family, but to push Caden into the shadows where he belonged.

One way or another, Joshua was hell-bent on winning.

Meanwhile, Alicia stirred from her sleep, the weight of fatigue still heavy on her limbs. Darkness had already fallen, yet she felt even more drained than before.

It was because her dreams revolved around that stranger, his touch still lingering on her skin.

She couldn't tell if it was the lingering effect of the drug or if that man was just so good in bed.

Even now, fully awake, she still felt like she was floating on cloud nine,

which made her blush uncontrollably.

Only when her phone buzzed with a call from Monica did she snap out of her daze. "H-hello?" she stammered.

Monica, ever observant, immediately noticed that something about her friend was off. "Your voice sounds all soft and dreamy. What's going on? Did you patch things up with that jerk?"

Alicia cleared her throat, trying to shake the fluster. "Of course not!"

Monica's laughter rang out, hearty and full of mischief.

"Anyway, I got your blood test results. I passed them to a friend of mine with some serious connections. He's digging around to see who bought the stuff."

Alicia sat up a little straighter, her mind sharpening. "Thanks, Monica. Appreciate it."

"If you really want to thank me, do me a favor: stop obsessing over that jerk. And after the divorce, focus on your career. You owe me that much."

Alicia's chest warmed, her head lowering in quiet gratitude. "I know, I know."

Now that she thought about it, she had come to the realization that her feelings for Joshua had never been pure love—they were born out of a debt, a sense of obligation.

Her family's expectations had always weighed heavily on her, and in that lonely, stifled childhood, it was Joshua who had been there.

His companionship had nurtured a vague affection she'd confused for love.

"Lucky for me, love's never been something I've held onto tightly," Alicia murmured. "These last two years... I'll just see it as repaying his kindness."

Monica paused, her usual boldness tempered with thoughtfulness. She knew better than anyone how, once upon a time, Joshua had indeed loved Alicia.

But, it turned out love could be a fleeting thing.

"Alicia, I really hope you've let go for good," Monica said with a convicted sigh.

A sharp pang hit Alicia's chest, her eyes stinging as she fought back the urge to cry. Quickly, she pressed her hand to her eyelids, refusing to let the tears fall.

It was only then she noticed something startling.

Stunned, she stared at her hand.

The wedding ring—something she had once held onto so tightly—was gone.

Gone for a whole day and night, and she hadn't even noticed.

Suddenly, her heart felt lighter, the weight of everything she'd been carrying beginning to lift. She whispered, more to herself than anyone, "Yes, I've truly let go."

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It didn't take long for Joshua to notice.

He had returned to grab something quickly when his eyes fell on her hand. His brow furrowed as he asked, without thinking, "Where's your wedding ring?"

