

A Spoonful of Sugar: Don't Beg for Love Chapter 1 - 5

Chapter 1

In the gynecology ward of First Crest Hospital in Genecity, the doctor shouted anxiously as he looked at the weak, pregnant woman on the delivery bed, "Push, push!" However, Hesper Rivera had already exhausted her strength at this point and her small face was ghastly pale. Her lips that were chewed through did not have a tinge of color in them, and she was barely breathing. "This is bad! The patient is experiencing a difficult birth, and she is hemorrhaging!" The doctor's expression changed drastically when he realized the urgency of the patient's condition. He immediately ran out of the delivery room and said, "Family members of Ms. Hesper Rivera, where are the family members? The patient's condition is critical!" However, the Duvals family members sitting at the waiting area were as calm as a cucumber. They did not appear to be anxious in the slightest, looking so unbothered that one would even wonder if they were related to Hesper in the delivery room. The people sitting here were precisely Hesper's father-in-law, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law, Sophia Duval. Madam Duval said in a bitterly sarcastic tone, "Is she the first woman ever to give birth? To think she's so hypocritical that she's even able to fake a critical condition when she's giving birth! She probably can't deliver the baby because she's too lazy to ever do anything!" Sophia was disgruntled because she would rather spend her time elsewhere, so she gloated over Hesper's misfortune by saying, "Yikes. I hope she doesn't end up dead with the baby!" Upon saying that, Madam Duval glared at Sophia in displeasure. Damn you, girl. It's fine

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that you're cursing Hesper, but why are you cursing my precious little grandson as well!

She had already commissioned someone to look into this matter and found out that Hesper was pregnant with a boy! The boy is going to be the successor of our family! Hesper can die, but my grandson will live!

The doctor could not help finding them loathsome and felt sympathy for Hesper in his

heart. However, he could not locate other family members, so he could only brace himself to speak to them once again.

"The patient is in critical condition now. If we can only choose one, whose life should I prioritize?"

"Save the baby." A cold, male voice was heard. He spoke without the slightest hesitation, and his voice was so cold without any emotion like a winter's wind.

The doctor looked up to find a handsome man with a tall and muscular stature walking

toward him with a graceful stance. He wore a suit and looked as if he just came out of a

business meeting. He assumed an elegant yet arrogant air, and his powerful presence

was so overbearing that it was suffocating.

The doctor inhaled a deep breath to calm himself. He wanted to strive for the last gleam

of hope for Hesper by saying, "Are you sure? In truth, both of you are still young and you can still have another child..."

Before the doctor could finish his sentence, the man signed his name swiftly on the document. His exquisite penmanship was just as arrogant and unruly as him.

The Duvals were not astonished at all as if the situation was well within their expectation. In fact, they even assumed a pleased expression.

How can Hesper's lowly life be comparable to the life of the Duvals' heir?

The doctor heaved a sigh in his heart and returned to the delivery room. He looked at the barely conscious Hesper with pity and encouraged her by saying, "You must not give up!"

Tears streamed down Hesper's shut eyes in her semi-conscious state. She heard it.

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Rickard chose the baby.

The last gleam of hope in Hesper's heart toward Rickard vanished. She exerted the last

ounce of energy she had to clutch the doctor's hand tightly and said, "Please save me. I

want to live!"

I can't die! I'm going to live!

I want to get a divorce!

Relying on her strong willpower to get through the extremely dangerous birth, she gave

birth to a boy a few hours later. The baby's loud cry echoed through the entire gynecology department.

Both the mother and baby were safe.

...

In the gynecology ward, a basin full of cold water was splashed on Hesper's body.

She

was instantly awakened by the bitter cold and opened her tired yet shocked eyes to find

the lavishly-dressed Madam Duval towering before her bed. She pointed at Hesper and

scolded, "Why are you still sleeping? You're such a lazy *ss!"

Her entire body drenched, Hesper trembled from the cold. She almost lost her life delivering the baby and lost her consciousness from exhaustion, yet she was criticized

by Madam Duval for being lazy.

She could not withstand the cold in her weakened state, yet Madam Duval instructed someone to splash cold water on her. That was just how great her mother-in-law was! It

was her husband, Rickard Duval's, great mother!

She was so harsh, vile, and malicious.

Madam Duval was very pleased by the sight of the disheveled Hesper. "Since you're awake, have some soup, quickly! I had someone prepare a lactation-boosting soup especially for you so you can breastfeed my grandson when you're done! Come and feed Mrs. Duval the soup!"

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Upon Madam Duval's order, someone immediately served a bowl of oily-looking soup to

Hesper. The surface of the soup was still boiling and steaming, a sign of it being freshly prepared.

Hesper would definitely be burned if she were to consume it right away.

Hesper understood that Madam Duval was trying to punish her. She declined by saying,

"I'll have it myself!"

However, Madam Duval, having come prepared, refused to accept Hesper's rejection.

"How can you do that yourself? Outsiders are going to criticize me for not being an understanding mother-in-law. It would be better for someone to feed you! Do it now!"

As soon as her voice died away, a few bodyguards stepped forward and grabbed Hesper. She struggled with all her might, but she was exhausted from the birth earlier,

so she was incapable of fighting back. She could only watch helplessly as another person approached her with the bowl of soup.

"No, don't..." Hesper shook her head, but the person clutched her lower jaw and forcefully opened her mouth before pouring in the boiling hot soup.

"Gah!" Hesper let out an agonizing, heartbreaking scream.

The lower half of her face and mouth were burned red, with bloody blisters popping up

everywhere. When she spat out a mouthful of fresh blood, steam came out of her mouth.

It hurt! It really hurt!

Madam Duval clapped in delight. "How is the soup? It tastes pretty good, right?"

Hesper, inhaling sharply from the pain, could not utter a word.

Madam Duval let out a cold grunt, not finding what she had done to have gone too far.

She wished that she could pour another hot bowl of soup on Hesper once again.

Had this b*tch not slept with my son, she wouldn't even deserve to be married into the

Duvals, let alone bear a child for the family!

She will have to suffer the hardships that are thrown at her!

"Let's go!" Madam Duval led the group of people to leave, feeling very pleased with

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herself. She did not even glance at Hesper, who was left to her own demise. Hesper endured the pain and got up from the bed shakily. She made her way to the washroom and washed her burned face with cold water over and over again. Her body trembled from the cold, and her belly ached. I hate her, I really hate her. I'm a human being too, so why am I being treated this way? Everyone was calling her shameless for resorting to anything to get herself married into the Duvals. They assumed that it was her who drugged Rickard back then, but she had no idea what happened that night and lost her chastity in confusion. Afterward, she became pregnant, and Rickard had no choice but to marry her because he was compelled by Mr. Duval Sr. Hesper had a crush on Rickard for ten years, but she had never expected that she would marry him in this manner. Before she got married, she knew that it would not be a happy marriage, but she did not expect to live in such torment either. She felt as if every moment spent with the Duvals was a torture. It should end by now. Hesper held her phone tightly and called Rickard. However, the call was not picked up after a long time. Just as she was preparing to abort the call, she heard a familiar, cold male voice. "Hesper." Just by listening to his voice, Hesper could imagine his cold, impatient expression. She took a deep breath and said, "Rickard, I want a divorce." The silence lasted for a moment before she heard Rickard's blood-curdling sneer. "Who do you think you are, asking for a divorce, Hesper? If there is going to be a divorce, I'll

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be the one who proposes it!"

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Chapter 2

Hesper could not help trembling from the cold just from listening to Rickard's voice. She bit her lower lip and said, "Sure, you can propose it then." Rickard's deep, attractive voice was filled with a mocking tone, "Hesper, what trick do you have up your sleeve this time? Your playing hard to get trick is old." Hesper knew that he would not believe her so she said anxiously, "I'm serious, Rickard. I don't want anything..." Before she could finish her sentence, she heard a strange man's voice come from the call. It was as if the person was reminding Rickard. "Mr. Duval, Ms. Wight is here." Hesper's hand unconsciously held the phone tighter. She felt her chest tighten for a moment. Before she could recover from her surprise, Rickard had already impatiently hung up the call, leaving only the busy signal beeping. Ms. Wight? Juniper is back. If Hesper was a pile of mud on the floor to Rickard, then Juniper was the pure moonlight in his heart. Had it not been for that accident, Hesper believed that Juniper would be Mrs. Duval by now. It was no wonder Rickard hated her so much. While Hesper was an orphan adopted by Mr. Duval Sr., Juniper was the heiress of the Wights with respectable status, a perfect match for Rickard. Hesper should have yielded the position of Mrs. Duval to her from the start. Hesper thought she had accepted it, but for some unknown reason, she felt her heart wrench in more pain. Rickard hung up Hesper's call and took a cold glance at the secretary who spoke earlier. "Didn't I tell you not to disturb me when I'm on a call?" Terrified, the secretary hastily lowered his head apologetically. "I'm sorry, Mr. Duval. It was my fault for deciding without consulting you prior." He was under the assumption that Rickard prioritized Juniper, so he lost his sense of propriety and informed Rickard in advance. He had not expected that his action would anger Rickard. "Don't do it again." Rickard retracted his sharp gaze and let the matter go since the secretary conducted himself well at work. "Where's Juniper?" Feeling relieved, the secretary answered in a very respectful tone with a tinge of admiration. "Ms. Wight is waiting for you at the lounge." Rickard glanced at his phone to find that Hesper had not called him again. He furrowed his eyebrows ever so slightly. "Let's go." Hesper wants a divorce? That's the biggest joke I've ever heard in my life! How can a woman like Hesper possibly be willing to get a divorce and shed the status of the young Mrs. Duval? Didn't she spare no effort in getting me to sleep with her so she could marry me and bear the family's heir? She's only playing a lowly trick to get my attention. Rickard sniggered. He would

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never fall for Hesper no matter what trick she played. All her efforts to torment him would only go to waste. ... "What happened?" Dressed in a lab coat, Julian Zink frowned in pity as he looked at the scald on Hesper's face and oral cavity. Hesper feigned a carefree manner, "Nothing. I accidentally burned myself while drinking hot soup." Julian was her friend in the orphanage. While Hesper was adopted by Mr. Duval Sr., Julian was adopted by another family, but they kept in touch throughout the years. She did not wish to worry Julian, so she did not tell him the truth. Julian saw through her from the start, so he went straight to the point by asking, "Hesper, are the Duvals mistreating you?" Hesper denied it. "No, you're overthinking it." Julian clenched his teeth and said angrily, "Stop lying to me, Hesper. Rickard chose to save the baby on the day you were in labor!" He hated himself for not being in the hospital at the time. Otherwise, he would never allow something like that to happen! Hesper fell quiet upon hearing that. Julian did his best to be persuasive. "Don't persist in the wrong cause anymore, Hesper. Rickard will never develop feelings for you." "I know." Hesper smiled, but it was a bitter smile. Her eyes lost their glint as well. "Ian, please help me get a dependable lawyer." Upon hearing that, Julian immediately assured her, "Sure, leave this to me. I will help you no matter what sort of difficult situation you find yourself in." Hesper felt warm and fuzzy in her heart and said gratefully, "Thank you, Ian." Julian prescribed Hesper the best medicine to not only stop her pain but also enhance her recovery without leaving behind a trace of a hideous scar. In the next few days, Hesper was discharged from the hospital and returned home. When the Duvals were not at home, she seized the opportunity to check on her child, seeing the baby at last. The soft, cuddly bundle of joy with a fair complexion was adorable. She could already see the superiority of the baby's facial features on his tiny face. He looked just like Rickard. Hesper cautiously picked up the baby as if she was holding a fragile treasure. She did not have the courage to exert too much strength. "Baby..." Perhaps due to their maternal bond, the baby was not repulsed by her but looked like he enjoyed being in her arms. He looked at her with his huge, curious eyes, and his little nose moved as if he was sniffing her scent. Hesper could not bear to put down the baby in her arms. She felt her heart wrench in pain at the thought of how she might not be able to see him again. "I'm sorry, baby," Hesper said sadly. "There's nothing that I can do. Your father would never let me take you with me..." As if sensing his mother's sorrow, the child pouted and cried loudly. Hesper was thrown into confusion. She hastily coaxed the child to sleep with great effort before she

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reluctantly placed him in the cot. She looked at his tiny face for a long time in a daze before walking out of the nursery. As soon as she walked outside, she bumped into Sophia. She planned on ignoring Sophia, but Sophia blocked her path at the stairway. Sophia looked at her arrogantly like a proud peacock. "Hesper, don't think that your position in our family is stable just because you gave birth to a son. You were only ever a birthing tool for our family, and now that you've had the child, you're useless to us. Grandfather is definitely going to kick you out of the family!" Hesper, having listened to remarks of this sort countless times during her pregnancy, was tired of it. She glanced nonchalantly at Sophia and said, "Are you done?" Sophia loathed Hesper for behaving as if she was better than anybody else without showing any respect. She was about to lose her temper when she suddenly remembered something and said proudly, "I'm not done. Do you know what my elder brother has been up to for the past few days? The Wights' heiress, Juniper, is back and they're exchanging their love for each other now! You're not even comparable to a strand of Juniper's hair. While she's the cloud in the sky you're a pile of mud on the floor!" In the past, Hesper would have been deeply saddened by the remark, but she was utterly heartbroken from the day she heard Rickard say 'save the baby'. Her heart had already shattered and become scarred, so she was unaffected by a hurtful remark such as this. Hesper, completely indifferent, found Sophia to be bothersome. She answered back sarcastically, "I don't know if she's a cloud in the sky, but I can confirm that you're a clamorous toad!"

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Chapter 3

Because of Rickard, Hesper tried all sorts of ways to please the Duvals in the past. She would always put up with them no matter how badly Madam Duval and Sophia insulted her. Sophia was used to seeing Hesper's submissive mannerism, so she was caught off guard when Hesper called her a toad. She was incredulous. "How dare you scold me, Hesper!" "I can scold you if I want. Do I need to choose a day?" The utterly disappointed Hesper felt as if she was free from the heavy burden weighing down on her. She stopped holding back. Feeling as if her authority was challenged, Sophia was so furious that her face flushed scarlet. She pointed at Hesper and burst out in a torrent of abuses. "You b*tch, who the f*ck do you think you are..." Hesper slapped away Sophia's pointing finger. Sophia, refusing to be treated that way, stretched out her hand and shoved Hesper ferociously. Hesper, caught off guard, lost her balance due to her weak physical condition. She missed a step on the stairs and rolled down the staircase before hitting her head on a step. Sophia was stunned for a moment, but then she recovered from her surprise and discovered that Hesper was injured and bleeding. She immediately clapped and cheered. "B*tch, this is what you get for going against me..." However, her voice halted to a stop when she saw a pair of dim eyes. Without her notice, Rickard stood over there and looked at her coldly. His dark eyes brimmed with thick darkness as if a storm was brewing. Sophia had always been afraid of her elder brother Rickard. Scared out of her wits by his terrifying appearance, she could not breath. "D...Dick..." In fact, for a brief moment, she even feared that he would choke her to death. Fortunately, Rickard did not do that but took a few steps forward and scooped the unconscious Hesper into his arms before blurting something extremely cold and harsh. "If anything bad happens to Hesper, you'll have to explain yourself to grandfather." Sophia trembled upon hearing the remark. Everyone knew how much Mr. Duval Sr. doted on Hesper. So much so that he loved her more than his own granddaughter, Sophia! Mr. Duval was receiving treatment overseas in the meantime, so he was unaware of the situation at home. If he were to find out that Sophia pushed Hesper down the stairs...the consequences would be too ghastly to comprehend. Sophia only felt lingering fear and called up the doctor in a haste. She could not refrain herself from thinking in her heart, "How great it would have been for Hesper to die during childbirth with her child so she wouldn't be causing so much trouble! That woman is quite lucky!" The doctor

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quickly arrived and examined Hesper. Fortunately, she was not injured severely. Her body was only weakened from the childbirth and needed more nourishment. Sophia was relieved hearing the doctor's explanation. She was planning on making a secret escape when her attention was suddenly drawn by a document placed on the bedside table. "Huh, what's this?" She sneakily picked up the document and rifled through it. Then, she widened her eyes in surprise. "Divorce papers!" Rickard's ferocious-looking pupils constricted ever so slightly. Sophia wondered if there was something wrong with her eyes. How else would she find these divorce papers in Hesper's room? Moreover, Hesper's name was already signed on the papers. Oh god, I must be hallucinating! Hesper actually wants to get a divorce? That's impossible! Hesper loves Rickard so much, and she's only managed to get herself hitched with a great deal of effort, so how could she bear to get a divorce? While Sophia was shocked, the divorce papers in her hand were pulled away by Rickard. "Rickard..." Sophia was about to say something when she realized that Rickard's expression was even more unpleasant and terrifying than earlier. His entire body emitted a terrifying, foreboding presence. He looked just like a beast that was about to be enraged. "Get out of here," said Rickard coldly. Sophia did not have the courage to speak anymore. She quickly scrambled out of the room as if her life depended on it. Rickard's ghastly gaze landed on Hesper's face, and he stared at her so intensely it was as if he could see through her. A moment later, he flipped through the divorce papers so he could see how much alimony the woman demanded, but he was surprised to find just a simple, straightforward statement. 'The woman is willing to abandon the property and move out of the house. The child will be raised by the man, and the woman shall reserve visitation rights for the child.' Rickard furrowed his eyebrows so tightly that he could even crush a fly to death. His eyes were brewing a dangerous storm. What sort of place does she think the Duvals' residence is? You come as you want and leave as you like. You don't even want to keep the child. Is it because you have something else? At the thought of the possibility, Rickard felt a gush of agitated anger surge into his chest. Waning to destroy everything before him, he tore up the divorce papers into shreds. The paper shreds scattered on the floor like snow. Even he had not noticed that the calmness and self-restraint that he had always been proud of crumbled in a barely discernible way. ... Rickard left Hesper's room and assumed his usual nonchalant expression. He exuded a coldness that would drive a person as far away from him as possible, so no one could get near him easily. He

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would agree to the divorce, but he could not accept that Hesper was cheating on him. It was a provocation toward his dignity as a man. Rickard called up his trusted subordinate cum secretary and ordered in a cold voice, "Run a check on the people that have interacted with Hesper recently at once, especially the men." The secretary shivered upon hearing that. It can't be. Does Hesper actually have the courage to cheat on Mr. Duval? Is she trying to get herself killed? But Hesper loves Mr. Duval so much and she doesn't look like someone who would cheat on her partner... Rickard grew impatient after failing to receive a response for a long time. He vented his anger by saying, "Kai Stone, are you dead?" Kai's entire body shook in fear when Rickard addressed him by his full name. Afraid that he would die for real if he still did not answer, he hastily said, "Yes, Mr. Duval. I'll look into it immediately!" Rickard's voice turned deep and cold when he said, "The faster, the better!" Kai said, "Yes, sir!" No one could go against the enraged Mr. Duval. Hesper regained consciousness the next day. Her head hurt so bad that she felt like her head would split. She rested for a while before she could open her eyes and thought about yesterday's incident. She seemed to indistinctly remember a pair of warm yet familiar arms wrapped around her and the person's scent was very similar to Rickard's... But why would Rickard take the initiative to hug her? Other than the accident on that night, they had not been on intimate terms during their marriage. He would not even glance at her without feeling contempt as if his eyes would be dirtied by the sight of her, let alone hold her hand or hug her. They were married, yet they were less than strangers. That was why she figured that it was just an illusion. Hesper touched her forehead and found the thick bandage wrapped around her head. Not expecting Sophia to suddenly attack her, she had taken a beating. It was fortunate that she did not feel any discomfort anywhere else other than her head. Her body was weak now, so it would be best for her not to confront the Duvals. She decided that she would bear with it so she could leave the sad place soon. Hesper was planning on resting for a while more, but someone just would not let her have it her way. "Hesper, why are you feigning your fragility when Sophia only gently pushed you once!" Madam Duval's bitterly sarcastic voice was heard even before she arrived. "You're going to have to see if you're capable of feigning your injury to gain pity before you do it too!"

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Chapter 4

Hesper sat on the bed weakly with a thick bandage wrapped around her head. She looked at the overbearing mother and daughter before she said halfheartedly, "Grandfather can tell if I'm faking it with a glance." Madam Duval grunted coldly and said, "Stop using Mr. Duval Sr. to threaten me. He's not in the country now, so no one's going to back you up! Someone, come and pin her down!" When her voice died away, a few middle-aged women with tall, huge physiques showed up in the room. It made Hesper remember the horrible incident that took place in the hospital room the other day. She remembered the feeling of the boiling hot soup being poured down her throat, how it felt like hot lava. She did not wish to experience that again, so she struggled with all her might and shouted frantically, "What are you doing? Let go of me! I'm going to tell my grandfather about this!" Madam Duval cracked a bitterly sarcastic smile. "We're going to give a post-delivery detox massage to you, of course. This is for your own good, so be appreciative. Not even Mr. Duval Sr. can pick a fault in this!" Hesper, knowing that Madam Duval could not possibly be so kind, felt an ominous presentiment in her heart. "Go away! Don't touch me!" She knew that Madam Duval loathed her; Madam Duval would never be so kind. However, as a new mother who was recently injured and weak against so many of them, she was utterly incapable of resisting them. The few middle-aged women pinned her against the bed and immobilized her limbs before they reached out their strong hands and pushed her down on her soft abdomen ferociously. "Gah!" Hesper let out an agonizing scream and her face turned ghastly pale. Her body was drenched in cold sweat, and even her voice was shaking. "It hurts..." Madam Duval felt as if her anger was vented at the sight of Hesper in pain. She said with a pleased expression, "You should feel the pain. They are professional post-delivery detox masseuses, and they will most certainly be able to help you detox your body. You'll thank me later." Sophia gloated at Hesper's misfortune and chuckled. "Hesper, this is a treatment that others don't get even if they beg for it. Enjoy it!" "I don't need...gah!" Hesper's entire body trembled from the pain, but there was nothing she could do to break free from the women's claws. She felt as if they would crush her internal organs soon. It was true that women would receive detox massages post delivery, but these women were instructed by Madam Duval to massage using a crude technique. The massage was not only useless for Hesper, it would even destroy her weak uterus. Madam Duval

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was extremely vicious with her motive. "Gah! Let go of me!" Rickard had just entered the house when he heard Hesper's agonizing scream. He furrowed his eyebrows instantly and asked a servant, "What's happening upstairs?" The servant answered submissively according to Madam Duval's instruction earlier, "Mrs. Duval is receiving a post-delivery massage. Women go through this all the time. It's supposed to help her recover quickly." "Is that so?" Rickard did not inquire further but removed his jacket and took a seat. "Gah!" The agonizing scream coming from upstairs grew more and more intense as if the person was being cruelly tortured. It was gut wrenching to listen to. "It's too noisy." Rickard stood up abruptly, his handsome face filled with impatience. He raised his leg to go upstairs. The servant hastily stopped him. "Mr. Duval! You're not allowed upstairs because this is a women's matter..." She did not expect Rickard to shove her away, taking it upon himself to walk to Hesper's room. He forced open the door and entered the room. Everyone was stunned, including Madam Duval and Hesper. They looked at Rickard in shock. Rickard found Hesper on the bed with a single glance. She was pinned to the bed by a few middle-aged women, her messy hair drenched in sweat and her small face ghastly pale. Her lips were drained of blood, and her body trembled uncontrollably from the intense pain. She looked like a little lamb awaiting slaughter. She was weak, pitiful, and helpless. For some reason, Rickard felt his heart wrench in pain. He glanced coldly at everyone in the room and said, "Are you done making noise?" Madam Duval immediately said, "Are we bothering you, Dick? Stuff the woman's mouth, quick..." Rickard said with a cold voice, "That's enough. Let go of her." Noticing the situation, Madam Duval explained, "Dick, we're not torturing her. This is for her own good. It's a standard procedure for women who have just given birth. She's just faking it..." Before she could finish her sentence, she was interrupted by Rickard. He said in an overbearing tone, "It would be best for all of you to know where to draw the line. She brought the eldest grandchild of the Duvals to the world." Sophia did not have the courage to speak, but Madam Duval was unbothered. So what if she has given birth to a grandchild? Rickard is still young, and there are plenty of women willing to bear children for the Duvals. Had Mr. Duval Sr. not wanted the child in Hesper's belly, she might not even have had the chance to bring it into this world. However, Madam Duval could not bring herself to speak her thoughts aloud because of Rickard's stern expression. Not wishing to affect her relationship with her son because of Hesper, she left with Sophia and the few middle-aged women. Rickard made his way to the

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bed and looked at Hesper's disheveled, tormented state before he said, "Does it hurt very much?" Hesper turned her face to the side weakly and refused to look at him. Her face was so pale that it was almost translucent like some sort of fragile yet precious porcelain. Rickard felt agitated in his heart for no apparent reason. He said with a cold, merciless expression, "You brought the pain on yourself." Had she not played tricks to sleep with him, she would not have become pregnant. Hence, she brought all the pain of bringing a child to the world on herself. Hesper was under the assumption that her broken heart was already numb by now, yet Rickard showed her that there was no end to the hurt she felt in her heart. She risked her life to give birth to his child, only for him to say 'you brought the pain on yourself'. Rickard was the only person in this world capable of hurting her severely with just a simple remark. Hesper held back her tears and said with a hoarse voice, "When are we getting a divorce?" Rickard's expression abruptly turned gloomy. The woman is actually still thinking about the divorce despite the pain? Is she so eager to get a divorce? "I don't like to be spoken to by someone who is lying down." He looked down at Hesper from above coldly. "We'll talk when you can sit upright." Upon saying that, Rickard turned around and left the room without bothering to take another glance at Hesper. Hesper laid on the bed and felt every part of her body throbbing in pain, especially her abdomen. It felt as if she was hit by a hammer countless times, which showed how cruel those middle-aged women were earlier. She had no idea if there would be long term aftereffects. As Hesper shut her eyes, tears filled with hatred streamed down her face. She could hear Rickard speaking to someone outside indistinctly, and it did not sound very real. "Call the doctor over to treat her," he said. "It will be very ominous for someone to die in the family when grandfather's 70th birthday is almost here." Ah. Hesper opened her eyes slowly. There was no anticipation and hope toward Rickard in her eyes anymore, only deathly stillness.

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Chapter 5

It was found out through the doctor's examination that Hesper's fragile uterus was indeed injured during the process. She would need to rest and recuperate, or it would possibly result in infertility in the future. She did not feel anything when she heard that. She waited until she could walk before she went looking for Rickard with the divorce papers. Rickard was sitting in the study room with a nonchalant expression as if he was expecting her. "Rickard." Hesper made his way to the man slowly and placed the divorce papers in her hand gently. She said calmly, "These are the divorce papers. I don't want anything from it. If you have no objection, please sign these." Rickard looked down to Hesper's fine penmanship and strangely found her handwriting to be an eyesore. "Who says that I have no objection?" Hesper pursed her lips. "You may voice your request." Rickard did not even rifle through the divorce papers before he said in a cold, merciless tone, "Hesper, not only will you leave everything from the marriage, you won't be allowed to see the child again from now on. You don't deserve to." Hesper's expression changed and she said recalcitrantly, "Why? I'm the mother of the child." Rickard's tone was filled with mockery. "You abandoned the child as soon as he was born. You don't deserve to be his mother." Hesper's body swayed unsteadily. She reached out to hold the table instinctively as if she was hit by a crushing blow. She really wasn't a good mother. But she had no other choice. If she could, she would take the child with her and travel far away, never to return. However, an influential family like the Duvals would never allow their lineage to lead a wandering life in poverty. Moreover, the child would live a good life with the Duvals instead of a hard life of drifting from place to place. He would receive better education and be loved by Mr. Duval Sr. She was just an orphan who had nothing. The child would suffer and endure hardships if she were to take him with her. She lost count of time before she made a decision that hurt her more than ever. "I agree." Rickard's pupils constricted abruptly. The woman would actually give up on her child just to get a divorce! He had no idea that Hesper didn't have any other choice. Rather than waiting until she was kicked out by the Duvals, she was taking it upon herself to leave and make way for Rickard's lover. At the very least, she could still leave in an honorable manner. Rickard could not suppress his anger anymore. He smacked the table. "Very well, Hesper!" Hesper had no idea why he was so infuriated with her; there was a tinge of confusion in her eyes. Just as she was preparing to

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Speak, the sound of her phone ringing interrupted their slightly tense ambience. She glanced at her phone. "It's grandfather." Rickard calmed down slightly. "Take it." Hesper tapped the accept button and said in a caring tone. "This is Hesper, grandfather. How are you feeling?" Mr. Duval Sr.'s kind voice was heard saying, "I'm feeling much better. I was just missing you and my chubby great-grandchild. I wish that I could fly back now to see all of you." Hesper comforted him by saying, "Don't worry, grandfather. Just continue your treatment and you'll see the child when you're back." Mr. Duval Sr. asked concerningly, "Is Dick treating you well? If not, you must tell me and I'll punish him for you!" "He...treats me well." Hesper was going against her conscience when she said that. She remembered the man's ice cold remark of 'save the baby' outside the delivery room the other day. Rickard did treat her well, so well that he would send her to heaven. However, she could not bring herself to speak the truth to Mr. Duval Sr. because his body would not be able to take it. Mr. Duval Sr. was the only Duval who cared about her, so she could not hurt him. Mr. Duval Sr. refused to believe her and requested her to switch to video call so he could check on her and her child. Hesper looked at Rickard subconsciously and asked for his consent with her gaze. Rickard heard Mr. Duval Sr.'s conversation, so he furrowed his eyebrows and nodded to express his approval. Both of them temporarily stopped the conversation about divorce and went to the nursery together in order to please Mr. Duval Sr. Hesper turned on the camera and aimed it at the sound asleep baby in the cot so Mr. Duval Sr. could take a good look at him through the video call. "He looks exactly like Dick when he was a baby!" Mr. Duval Sr. was delighted and chatted incessantly. He wished that he could travel through the screen to hold the little chubster. Hesper felt slightly gratified in her heart to see how Mr. Duval Sr. doted on the child. The child would be loved by someone when she was not around. After he was done looking at the baby, Mr. Duval Sr. requested again, "I can hear that Dick is with you. Let me see both of you." "Sure." Hesper would never decline Mr. Duval Sr.'s request. She switched to the front camera and felt a hold on her waist. Rickard had actually stretched out his arm to wrap around her waist. Moreover, he whispered a warning in her ear. "It would be best for you to work with me so as to not affect grandfather's condition." Mr. Duval Sr.'s body could not take it if his mood was affected. Hesper understood that she could only maintain the intimate posture with Rickard. Her body felt slightly rigid, but her expression was still quite natural. It was fortunate that Mr. Duval Sr. did not notice that anything was off during the call. He

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said happily, "It seems that both of you have grown closer since the child was born. I can set my mind at peace seeing both of you act so loving." Hesper felt extremely uneasy. It was very rare for her to share such an intimate moment with Rickard. He had always loathed her, held her in contempt and avoided her like the plague, as if she was some disgusting piece of trash. It must be tough for him to put on an act and pretend to be close with her now. "Hesper." Rickard suddenly addressed in an unprecedented gentle tone. Hesper raised her head in a daze and watched as the man's extremely handsome face enlarged before her eyes. Then, he planted a gentle, feather-like kiss on her fair-complexioned forehead. Hesper was completely dumbfounded. She did not expect Rickard to actually go to this extent. Mr. Duval Sr. was delighted. He looked at both of them with an affectionate gaze and said 'very well' a few times. Hesper had yet to recover from her surprise for a long time after the video call ended until she heard Rickard's cold voice in her ears. "Are you all right?" Hesper looked at Rickard and opened her mouth. Rickard took it upon himself to speak first as if he could tell what was coming from her, "I won't agree on getting a divorce until grandfather is cured. Before then, you'll remain in the Duvals' residence." He continued to speak sternly as if he had found a reasonable excuse. "If grandfather's condition deteriorates because his body couldn't take it after finding out about our divorce, you'll be the offender." Hesper felt suffocated by the guilt and burden put on her. The more delighted Mr. Duval Sr. was now, the sadder and more disappointed he would be when he found out the truth. His drastic emotional changes would most certainly be detrimental to his health. She owed a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Duval Sr., who was the person she did not want to see hurt the most in this world. She could only relent. "I agree." The moment her voice faded, Rickard's tensed heart relaxed without his notice.

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