

Chapter 1 Me? Pregnant?

"You're six weeks pregnant! Congratulations!" the doctor announced to me after I nished the ultrasound.

The doctor had this awless smile on her face, but it hit me like a bolt of lightning, leaving me frozen in my seat, unable to move.

No way! How could I possibly be pregnant at this time?

For a soon-to-be abandoned wife in a contractual marriage, this was not good news.

Two years ago, thanks to Grandpa Michael's arrangement, I got married to my husband Ethan. But now that Grandpa Michael was gone, Ethan insisted on divorcing me, and I had no way to change his mind.

After the doctor wiped off the ultrasound gel from my belly, she handed me a small photo taken from the ultrasound. I stared at that blurry little thing in the picture, still unable to believe the reality of my pregnancy. But at the same time, another thought barged into my head. What if I told Ethan about the pregnancy? Maybe he would give up on the divorce because of the baby.

But would he? I started seriously considering this possibility.

No! He wouldn't! Once he had made up his mind, no one could change it. He might even think I was desperate enough to use the baby as a threat. He would never believe this was an accident.

I felt my stomach sink as the doctor continued talking about whatever dos and don'ts during the pregnancy. Then she started scribbling some notes on her prescription pad, chatting happily. I wasn't listening to a word she was saying. All I could do was feel shocked and depressed.

"You will be ne, Hannah, don't worry. You are young, but you are strong. You can do this!" She tried to cheer me up. Maybe she thought that I was scared about the possibility of having a child. I was actually scared about breaking the news to the father.

I was denitely having an out of body experience. I had no clue what I should do next.

I nodded at her and managed a "thank you" that barely had any sound. Then I mechanically stuffed that small picture and the ultrasound report in my bag along with a hospital contract which I should get signed and left her oce. I dragged myself through the cold and aseptic corridors of the hospital, trying to delay the moment that I would go back home and face my husband. Normally, this kind of news would be received with celebrations and a huge announcement in the news for a high-prole couple like us: a new heir is coming, and a family is growing, but not in our case.

Because Ethan was leaving me.

Parked outside the hospital complex was a luxury black Mercedes waiting for me. Luxury cars and handsome men naturally attract a lot of attention, and as I was married to a handsome man who collected cars as a kid collects baseball cards, you could say that I was used to that unwanted attention. I did what I always do and ignored the looks while I headed to the car.

I could see that the window was partially opened, and a man's stern eyes could barely be seen from the outside. Yet, I knew those eyes as I knew the back of my hand. They were Ethan's. I took a deep breath and crossed to the other side of the car and sat on the passenger's seat.

Ethan didn't look at me when I got into the car, but I knew that he was aware of my arrival when he frowned slightly. His low voice asked me dryly: "So? Is the contract all set?"

Ethan brought me to the hospital because our company needed to sign a contract with them, but he had no idea that I also went for an ultrasound check-up.

"Sure," I murmured and handed him the contract. "Dean Mason says hello," I told him. Ethan nodded but didn't say a word.

Today's contract with the hospital was actually my responsibility, and I should have driven myself there. Yet, for some reason, Ethan decided to drop me off and wait for me.

Ethan gave me back the contract as if ignoring it and complained: "You took too long."

"Sorry, I took a detour to the restroom," I lied to him.

With no other words, he started the car, and we headed home.

An uncomfortable silence lled the space on our way home. Well, this was my life. Besides running some errands for Ethan here and there, he believed that I was just a kind of a wallower. Therefore, if he didn't have anything to say to me, he wouldn't make the effort to make small talk.

We headed downtown. The sun had already settled. Suddenly, Ethan turned the car and didn't drive back to our villa. Where were we heading to? Although his movement made me confused, I simply didn't bother to ask him where we were going. I was still worried about the big news of the day. I simply don't have the heart to tell him that I was pregnant. He didn't notice that I was conicted, though. When I discreetly looked at him, his cold eyes remained ahead, not paying attention to me at all.

"Ethan I..." I started, deciding to tell him, but the palms of my hands were sweaty. I panicked and started to hyperventilate. On second thought, telling him was a really bad idea.

"Yes?" He broke the silence with his signature short answer when I stopped talking.

I pressed down my anxiety and started "I..."

It was only three words. Yet, they seemed the most dicult words that existed. Ironically, his cell phone rang, and I once again was robbed of his attention. So, I decided to remain silent about my pregnancy for the moment.

"Tess, what's wrong?" Ethan answered the call and said that woman's name.

Tess was his mistress, the apple of his eye. His tone with his mistress was extremely tender, covered in affection. He was devoted to her in a way that he never was to me. Every word he uttered to her on the phone felt like a piece of my heart being ripped out, bleeding incessantly. I was in so much pain, struggling to breathe, even though I appeared perfectly ne on the surface. I was jealous of Tess and loathed myself. Even if Ethan had shown me a moment of tenderness, I wouldn't have felt worthy of any affection.

On the phone, Tess told him something that I couldn't hear, and Ethan's reaction was immediate. He suddenly stepped on the brakes, nearly giving me a head bump, but my rst instinct was to protect my baby, so I shielded my belly just in time. But Ethan's attention wasn't on me at all; he was trying to calm her down on the phone. "Ok, I'll be with you soon. Don't come around," with these words, he ended the call. His tender expression changed back to his indifference toward me. He looked in my direction and murmured: "Get off the car."

This again! Ethan was freaking out because of that woman's call, eager to dump me once more! This wasn't the rst time something like this had happened. He always put Tess ahead of me, like I didn't even compare to a pinky nger of hers. Even if he knew I was pregnant, he probably wouldn't hesitate to kick me to the curb for some other woman.

I stared at his cold-hearted expression, feeling a bitter taste in my gut. I nodded, swallowing the words I wanted to say, and got out of the car as he demanded.

This was my life, but it wasn't supposed to start off like this, man. It all changed when I got married.

I considered my marriage with Ethan as an accident and at the same time, my fate. We could have gotten married for many reasons, but denitely, none of them has anything to do with love. Ethan's heart belonged to Tess. I was just a trophy wife, and our marriage was an obstacle to his happiness. I was desperately in love with him. He learned to tolerate me, but that was all.

Yet, here I was, married to a man that was incapable of loving me. All because of my grandpa Michael.

Two years ago, my grandpa suffered from a heart attack and somehow managed to make Ethan promise to marry me. Although Ethan was hesitant, he obliged my grandpa, not because of me, but for him. After all, we all thought that he was dying.

It turns out that grandpa survived his heart attack, and we got stuck together. For most of the past two years, Ethan pretended that I didn't exist. But not anymore. This arrangement recently changed because Michael passed away and now, I can see that Ethan can't wait to call his lawyer and ask him to prepare our divorce papers. I know that at the rst opportunity, he will slip the paper sheets to me so I can sign them. And honestly, this is no surprise to me. I've seen this moment coming from miles away.

It took me a while, but after Ethan dropped me practically in the middle of nowhere, I nally managed to get back to our villa. It was late. The manor was empty like a haunted house, and I felt as empty as its huge rooms and halls.

I couldn't help but feel sad about my own fate and cry my eyes out alone in the hallway. It felt like I never had a choice from the start, but I willingly walked right into its trap. I fell in love with the man destiny had set up for me, but that man didn't love me back. I was never really happy here, so I thought to myself that I wouldn't mind leaving it after the divorce.

But I was worried sick about the baby in my womb, unsure if I was ready to handle the single mom gig. I gently rested my hand on my belly, even though it wasn't all basketball-sized and sticking out like a bump just yet. But deep down, I knew there was a tiny life blossoming inside me, growing. Would it have its own tastes and personality? Would it prefer summer or winter? Would it be tall or short? Would it have an easy laugh, or would it frown like its father?

These thoughts overwhelmed me at that moment. Even though I couldn't ght for anything in that marriage anymore, but I knew that if this pregnancy was the aftermath of my arranged marriage, I would make it the best part of this whole story. If life gives me lemons, then I'll squeeze them into lemonade!

I wiped away the tears from my face, determined to be strong for my baby. I took a hot shower to calm myself down and dragged my exhausted body back to bed. Just as sleep was starting to take over, I heard a jarring sound coming from the driveway. Though the noise sounded like Ethan's car, I didn't think it could be him. He was supposed to spend the night with Tess, so why would he choose to come back to the manor?

I closed my eyes again, and the sound of tires scraping against the pavement quickly faded away.

After a brief moment, I heard the doorknob of my room being twisted open. Alert, I climbed out of bed and pulled the blanket up to my chest. Then the lights icked on, and to my surprise, it was Ethan standing there!

"Ethan? What are you doing back? Aren't you supposed to be with Tess?" I blurted out.

He didn't rush to answer my question but walked over to the edge of the bed and slowly sat down.

"You want me to be with Tess?" Ethan gave me a sidelong glance and began loosening his tie around his neck.

"No... that's not what I meant..." I tried to explain, but before I could say anything else, Ethan suddenly loomed over me like a towering mountain, his shadow engulfing me completely.

Before I could react, he recely bit my lip and breathed into my ear, whispering, "Mrs. Brown, now is the time for you to fulll your obligations."

In an instant, my breath was completely stolen away.