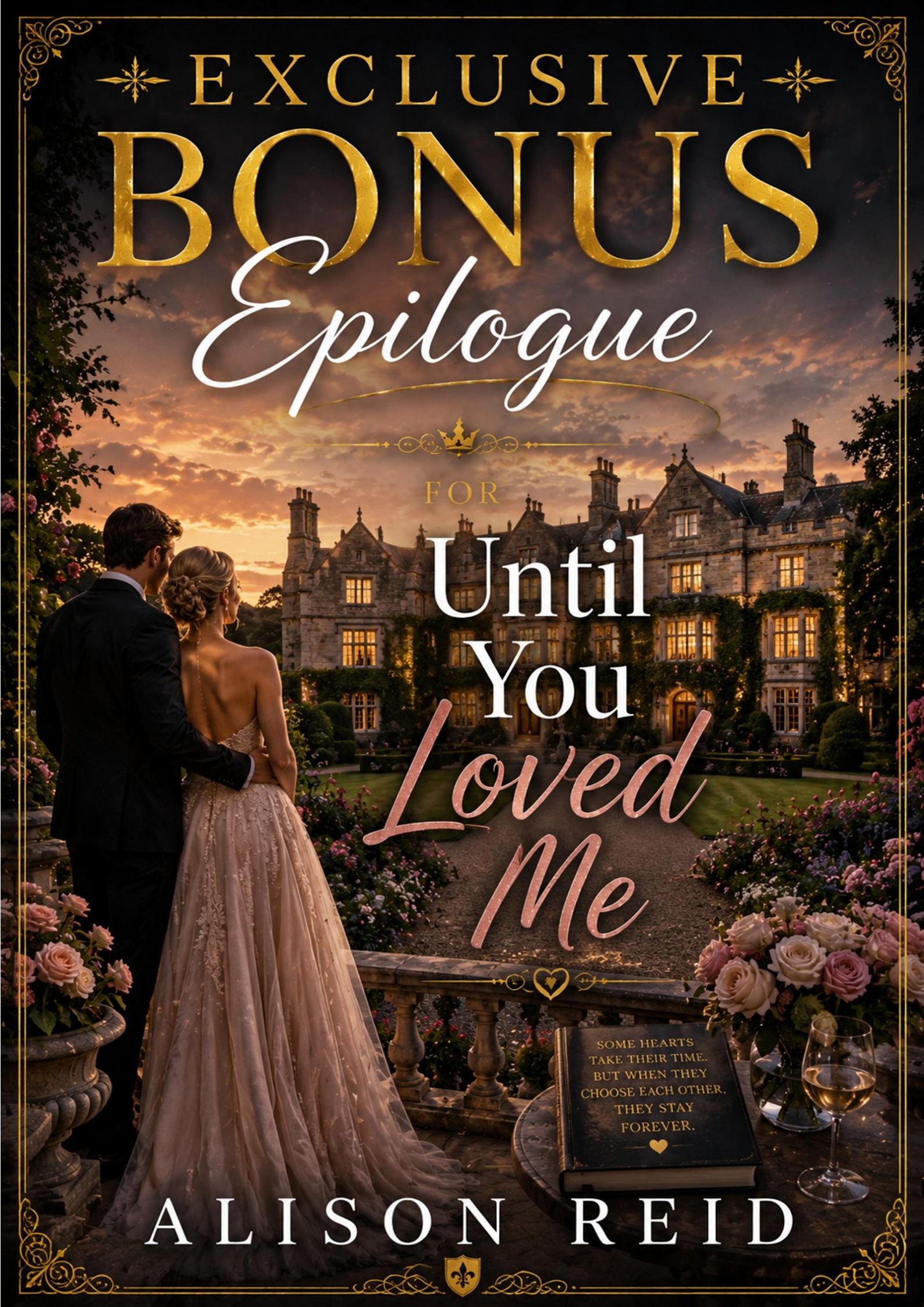
EXCLUSIVE

BONUS Epilogue

FOR

Until You Loved Me



ALISON REID

Exclusive Bonus Epilogue

Until You Loved Me

by Alison Reid

Five Years Later…

Rain lashed softly against the windows of Sneddon-Lewis Towers while Grace sat at her desk outside John's office, one hand resting absently against the gentle curve of her stomach as she scanned through the final contract revisions.

"You're pale."

She looked up to find John standing in the doorway of his office, tall and imposing as ever in charcoal tailoring, his dark eyes narrowed on her face.

"I'm pregnant," she said dryly. "Apparently it's considered normal."

His gaze lingered on her far too long for that answer to satisfy him.

At thirty, Grace was still breathtakingly beautiful, though motherhood and happiness had softened some of the fragile, guarded elegance she'd once worn like armour. Her honey-brown hair fell loose over one shoulder today, and her violet eyes looked tired beneath the soft office lighting.

Too tired.

John hated that look.

"You were coughing all morning," he said.

"It's winter in London. Everyone is coughing."

"You're exhausted."

"I'm six months pregnant."

"You nearly fell asleep during the Henderson meeting."

"I closed my eyes for three seconds."

"Four."

Despite herself, her mouth twitched faintly.

Five years later and he was still impossible. But the edge beneath his voice worried her. John had become frighteningly attentive during this pregnancy. Their son Oliver had arrived easily, a beautiful dark-haired little boy with Grace's eyes and John's stubbornness. But after that…

Nothing.

Years of disappointment. Specialists. Hope followed by heartbreak month after month until Grace had quietly started mourning the second child she thought they might never have.

Then suddenly, unexpectedly, this baby.

John had become almost obsessively protective from the moment the test turned positive.

"You need to stop working," he said flatly.

Grace sighed softly. "John—"

"You're carrying my child, not running a marathon."

"I'm your assistant."

"You're my wife."

The words still carried weight when he said them. Heavy. Possessive. Absolute. His gaze dropped briefly to her stomach before returning to her face.

"You've done enough today. Go home."

"And leave you drowning in meetings?"

"I was drowning perfectly well before you came into my life."

"That's not true and you know it."

A faint shadow crossed his face because they both knew exactly what his life had looked like before her. Cold. Controlled. Empty.

Grace rose slowly from her chair, pressing a hand briefly against the small ache beneath her ribs. John noticed immediately. His expression hardened.

"That's it. You're done."

"It's just a stitch."

"You can barely stand upright."

"I absolutely can."

To prove it, she took two determined steps toward him. Unfortunately, the room tilted slightly. John caught her before she stumbled, one arm wrapping firmly around her waist.

"Grace."

His voice dropped dangerously low. She leaned briefly against his chest, suddenly too tired to argue properly.

"I'm fine," she whispered.

"You're burning up."

Only then did she realise he was right. His large hand slid against her cheek, his expression turning grim.

"Jesus Christ."

"It's probably just a cold."

"No." His jaw tightened. "You're done. Completely. I want you home now."

"I can still work from home."

"You can breathe from home," he corrected harshly. "That's all I'm interested in."

* * * * * * * *

But the next few days only worsened. The cough deepened. The exhaustion became crushing. By Thursday morning, even climbing the stairs left Grace breathless. Jenny had gone to visit her sister for the day, and Oliver was at daycare. Grace had insisted she was perfectly capable of managing one quiet afternoon alone. John had not believed her.

Unfortunately, an emergency board meeting in the city had left him trapped for most of the day. By three o'clock, he was halfway through tearing apart two senior executives when his phone vibrated. He almost ignored it. Then he saw the daycare number. Something cold moved through his chest instantly.

"Mr. Sneddon?" the young woman on the line sounded nervous. "We just wanted to check if someone was coming for Oliver? Mrs. Sneddon is usually early and we haven't heard from her."

John was already on his feet.

"What time is it?"

"Three-thirty."

Grace was never late. Never.

"I'll be there in twenty minutes."

He ended the call and grabbed his coat so violently one of the board members actually flinched.

"Meeting adjourned."

"John—"

"Now."

No one argued.

* * * * * * * *

The house was silent when he arrived.

Too silent.

John pushed through the front door with a growing sense of dread clawing up his spine, Oliver balanced against one arm while the little boy chattered sleepily about dinosaurs and finger painting.

"Daddy, Miss Claire said I did the best T-Rex—"

"Grace?"

Nothing. John's heartbeat accelerated instantly.

"Grace!"

Oliver went quiet immediately at the sharpness in his father's voice. Then John saw her. At the bottom of the staircase. His entire body went cold. She was crumpled awkwardly against the polished wood floor, one arm trapped beneath her, honey-brown hair spilled across the marble tiles. Blood streaked faintly near her temple. For one terrible second the world simply stopped.

"Grace!"

He reached her in seconds, dropping hard to his knees beside her while still clutching Oliver against him. Her skin was burning. Her breathing shallow.

"Baby—" his voice broke violently as he touched her face. "Grace, wake up."

Oliver twisted in his arms then suddenly saw her properly.

"Mummy?"

The tiny, frightened voice nearly destroyed what remained of John's control. Oliver's little body stiffened instantly.

"Mummy sleeping?" he whispered uncertainly.

No. No, she was not sleeping. Panic thundered through John so hard he could barely breathe himself. Grace made a weak sound in her throat but didn't wake.

“Daddy?” Oliver’s voice trembled now. “Why Mummy on floor?”

John forced himself to move. Forced himself to think. He shifted Oliver higher against his hip with one arm while the other carefully checked Grace’s stomach. The baby moved faintly beneath her dress.

Thank God.

Thank God.

But Grace still wasn’t waking properly. Fear unlike anything he had ever known ripped through him. John dragged his phone out with unsteady hands.

“Ambulance,” he barked the second someone answered. “My wife is unconscious and pregnant. She fell down the stairs. She’s burning up. Hurry the hell up.”

He gathered her carefully into his arms, panic ripping through the controlled man he’d spent his whole life pretending to be.

“Grace.” His forehead pressed against hers. “Open your eyes.”

Her lashes fluttered weakly.

“John…”

Relief nearly destroyed him.

“I’m here.”

“Mummy cuddle.”

“Not yet,” John said quickly, tightening his hold on him while panic continued clawing through his chest. “Mummy needs help first.”

A terrible rattling cough suddenly tore through Grace’s body. John’s blood ran cold. Not the fall.

God—

She’d been sick far longer than either of them realised. Oliver began crying properly now, frightened by the sound. John pulled him close automatically

while still kneeling beside Grace, trying desperately to hold together two people he loved more than life itself.

"It's alright," he told his son roughly, though nothing about this was alright. "Daddy's here."

Grace's fingers moved weakly across the floor, searching blindly. John caught her hand instantly. And for the first time in years, genuine helpless terror cracked straight through the ruthless control John Sneddon was famous for. Because Grace looked fragile. Too fragile. And suddenly all he could think was that he loved her too much to survive losing her.

The front door suddenly opened.

"Grace, love, I'm home—"

Jenny's voice stopped abruptly. Then came the sound of her bag hitting the floor.

"Oh my God."

She hurried into the hall and went pale at the sight before her. Grace unconscious on the marble. Oliver sobbing. John on his knees looking as though the world had just ended.

"John—"

"Take Oliver," he said immediately, his voice low and deadly calm in a way that frightened Jenny more than shouting would have. "The ambulance is coming."

Oliver clung harder to his father instantly.

"No!"

"Buddy—" John swallowed hard, trying to steady his son while his own hands shook. "Jenny's going to hold you for a minute."

"I want Mummy!"

"I know."

Grace stirred weakly again, another horrible cough ripping through her chest. Oliver burst into fresh tears at the sound. John closed his eyes briefly.

Jesus Christ.

Jenny knelt beside them quickly, smoothing Oliver's dark hair with trembling hands.

"Oh sweetheart," she whispered gently. "Come to Jenny."

"No!"

John forced himself to look at his son. Oliver's little face was blotchy with tears, terrified beyond understanding. For one awful second John nearly lost control completely. Because Oliver looked exactly like Grace when frightened. Those same violet eyes. Those same trembling lips.

"Listen to me, Buddy." John's voice roughened badly. "Mummy needs Daddy to help her right now. Can you be brave for me?"

Oliver gave a broken little sniffle.

"But Mummy hurt."

"I know." John kissed the top of his son's head hard. "But the doctors are coming to make her better."

"Promise?"

The word nearly destroyed him. John looked down at Grace lying motionless on the floor and felt pure fear rip through him again. Then he looked back at his son.

"Yes," he lied hoarsely. "I promise."

Jenny carefully took Oliver into her arms. The little boy reached desperately toward Grace.

"Mummy…"

Grace's eyes fluttered weakly open at the sound of his voice.

"Oliver…"

Her voice was barely audible.

"Mummy!" Oliver struggled against Jenny immediately. "Mummy wake up!"

Grace tried to lift her head. John stopped her instantly.

"No." His hand slid behind her neck carefully. "Don't move, baby."

Her fever-bright eyes found his. And even half-conscious, she saw it. The fear in him.

"Sorry…" she whispered weakly.

Something savage twisted through his chest.

"Don't you dare apologise to me."

Another cough wracked her body. John tightened his grip on her hand while Jenny carried a crying Oliver toward the sitting room, murmuring soft reassurances even as tears streamed down her own face. The second they disappeared, the mask finally cracked. John bent over Grace, his forehead pressing hard against hers.

"You stay with me," he said roughly. "Do you hear me? You stay with me."

Her fingers curled faintly around his. Then the distant sound of sirens shattered through the silence outside Rosewood.

And as he climbed in beside her while paramedics fitted oxygen over her face, one brutal thought kept repeating through his mind.

Not her.

Anything but her.

* * * * * * * *

The private hospital suite was unnaturally quiet except for the steady hiss of oxygen and the soft, relentless beeping of monitors. John stood beside the bed like a man carved from stone. Only his eyes betrayed him.

Grace lay pale against the white pillows, dark lashes resting against colourless cheeks, oxygen tubing beneath her nose while IV lines disappeared into her arm. Her honey-brown hair spread across the pillow in tangled waves, and the bruise at her temple stood out viciously against her skin.

Pneumonia.

Severe pneumonia.

The doctor had explained it calmly enough. Exhaustion, pregnancy, stress, lowered immunity. She had collapsed from lack of oxygen before falling down the stairs. The baby appeared unharmed, but Grace's lungs were badly infected.

"She's very sick, Mr. Sneddon."

Very sick.

The words had lodged inside his chest like shrapnel. John stared at her now, one hand braced against the bedrail because suddenly standing upright felt like effort. The room smelled sterile. Cold. Wrong.

Nothing about Grace belonged in hospitals. She belonged at Rosewood curled beside the fire with Oliver in her lap. She belonged laughing softly when he became too overbearing. She belonged in his bed, warm and alive beneath his hands. Not here. Never here.

The doctor entered quietly. Middle-aged. Calm. Experienced enough not to be intimidated by John Sneddon glaring at him like a threat.

"She's stabilising," he said carefully. "The antibiotics are beginning to work, but the next twelve hours are important."

John's jaw tightened. "She woke briefly in the ambulance."

"That's encouraging."

"She can barely breathe."

"That's the pneumonia."

John turned sharply. "I know what the bloody diagnosis is."

The doctor remained irritatingly composed.

"She's six months pregnant. Her lungs are under additional pressure already. Pneumonia can become serious very quickly in pregnancy."

John's expression darkened violently at the word serious.

"But?" he demanded.

"But she's young, otherwise healthy, and she received treatment quickly. I expect her to recover."

Expect. Not guarantee. John looked back at Grace immediately. As if checking she was still there. The doctor softened slightly.

"She'll likely need several days here, then strict rest at home afterward."

"She'll have it."

"I mean complete rest, Mr. Sneddon."

"You think I'm letting her move?"

The doctor glanced at him for a long moment. Then wisely left. Silence returned. John sat carefully beside the bed at last, leaning forward slowly until his forearms rested against his knees. For several minutes he simply watched her breathe. Each shallow breath scraped something raw inside him.

His hand moved almost involuntarily toward her stomach, resting gently over the curve beneath the blankets. The baby shifted faintly. Relief nearly brought him to his knees.

"Terrifying little creature," he muttered hoarsely.

His fingers slid upward until they found Grace's hand instead. Cold. Too cold. He wrapped his larger hand tightly around it.

"You frightened me."

The words barely existed above a whisper. John Sneddon did not frighten easily. Entire corporations feared him. Competitors folded under pressure he barely noticed. He negotiated billion-pound deals without blinking.

But this—

Seeing Grace unconscious on the marble floor with blood near her hair—

Something inside him had stopped. And it still hadn't properly restarted. Her fingers twitched weakly in his grasp. Instantly he straightened.

"Grace?"

Her lashes fluttered slowly before her eyes finally opened. Drugged. Exhausted. Confused. But alive.

Thank Christ.

John's entire body loosened with relief so sharp it was almost pain.

"There you are," he said quietly.

She frowned faintly beneath the oxygen tubing.

"Oliver…"

"He's fine."

Her eyes closed briefly again.

"You picked him up?"

"Yes."

"You remembered his dinosaur backpack?"

Despite everything, something dangerously close to laughter escaped him.

"Yes, darling. I remembered the bloody dinosaur backpack."

Her lips moved faintly, trying to smile. Then her expression shifted as memory returned.

"The stairs…"

"You collapsed."

“I was trying to go upstairs.” Her breathing hitched painfully. “I thought maybe if I slept…”

“You should’ve called me.”

“You were busy.”

The fury that had been simmering quietly beneath his fear suddenly surfaced.

“I don’t care if Parliament was burning to the ground. You call me.”

Her tired eyes moved toward him slowly.

“You looked stressed lately.”

“I was stressed because my pregnant wife was working herself into the grave beside me.”

A weak little protest formed immediately.

“I was helping—”

“You were carrying our child while barely able to stand.”

Tears suddenly filled her eyes. Not dramatic. Just exhausted and overwhelmed.

“I didn’t want to let you down.”

The words destroyed him. John stared at her for a long moment before moving abruptly closer.

“Grace.” His voice turned rough. “Look at me.”

She did.

“You could never let me down.”

Emotion clogged his throat so violently the next words nearly didn’t emerge.

“You are the best thing that ever happened to me.”

Her eyes widened slightly. Because even after five years of marriage, John did not say things like that easily. He touched her hair carefully away from her bruised temple.

"When I saw you lying there…" His jaw flexed hard. "I thought—"

The sentence broke apart. Grace had never seen him like this before. Never seen fear strip away all the steel. Her weak fingers tightened around his hand.

"I'm okay."

"No," he said harshly. "You're not."

His forehead lowered carefully against hers. And when he spoke again, his voice was almost unrecognisable.

"I can survive losing money. Companies. Houses. I can survive anything except losing you."

A tear slid slowly down her cheek. John kissed it away instinctively. Then another. And another.

"I love you," she whispered weakly.

His eyes closed briefly like the words physically hurt him. Because they did. Love had once been the thing he feared most in the world. Now it was the thing keeping his heart beating.

"You're stuck with me, Grace," he murmured against her skin. "So, stop trying to give me heart failure."

* * * * * * * *

"Oliver is out like a light."

Grace's soft voice broke the silence of the bedroom. John didn't turn immediately.

He stood beside the tall windows overlooking the grounds of Rosewood, one hand in his pocket, the other resting against the glass. Moonlight silvered the sprawling gardens below, the ancient trees swaying gently in the night wind.

Five years ago, this house had been a battleground between them. Now it was home.

Grace crossed the room quietly, the soft fabric of her nightgown whispering against her skin. She moved more slowly these days beneath the weight of pregnancy, one hand instinctively supporting the underside of her stomach as she walked.

When she reached him, she slipped her arms around him from behind as best she could around the baby bump and rested her cheek against the broad warmth of his back. Instantly, his hand covered hers. Always immediate. Always aware of her.

"He fought sleep for forty minutes," she murmured. "Apparently dinosaurs are nocturnal and therefore so is he."

A low sound of amusement rumbled through his chest.

"That's your fault."

"My fault?"

"You bought him the dinosaur book."

"You bought him the six-foot dinosaur."

"It was educational."

Grace laughed softly against him. God, he loved that sound. John turned then, slowly gathering her carefully into his arms. Even now, after all these years, he handled her with an almost reverent possessiveness, as though some part of him still remembered the terrified girl he'd once carried upstairs after her father's funeral.

Only she wasn't fragile anymore. Life with John had strengthened her. Not hardened. Never that. But she no longer looked like a woman the world could destroy easily. Still, the pneumonia had shaken him badly. Even weeks later, Grace could feel it lingering beneath his skin. The fear.

"You're brooding again," she said softly.

"I don't brood."

"You absolutely brood."

"I strategize."

She tipped her head back to look at him properly, smiling when she found that familiar severe expression on his devastatingly handsome face.

"You've barely let me out of your sight since the hospital."

"That seems wise considering your recent habit of collapsing."

"I had pneumonia."

"You had me thinking my life was over."

The quiet roughness in his voice stole her smile. There it was again. That lingering fear he tried so hard to hide from everyone except her. Grace lifted one hand to his face, fingertips brushing lightly along the roughness of his jaw.

"I'm okay now."

"You nearly weren't."

The words came instantly. Too instantly. His eyes moved over her face with that same unbearable intensity they always carried when it came to her. John Sneddon had never learned moderation in love. Once he finally allowed himself to feel it, he had loved her with the same relentless force he brought to everything else in life. Completely. Dangerously.

"You know what I saw when I walked into that hall?" he said quietly.

Grace's heart tightened.

"John—"

“No. Listen to me.” His arm tightened around her. “I saw my mother. I saw Brian. I saw every bloody person I’ve ever buried.” His jaw flexed harshly. “And then I saw you lying there and realised none of it would compare to losing you.”

Emotion lodged painfully in her throat. Even now, hearing him speak this openly felt rare and precious.

“You’re not going to lose me.”

“You can’t promise that.”

“No,” she whispered honestly. “But I can promise I’m going to fight very hard to stay.”

His eyes closed briefly. When they opened again, the rawness inside them almost hurt to witness.

“I hated love once.”

Grace smiled faintly. “I remember.”

“I thought it made people weak.” His thumb stroked slowly over her wrist. “Then you walked into my life looking at me like I was the devil himself.”

“You were terrifying.”

“I was fascinated.”

“You were arrogant.”

“I still am.”

She laughed softly again, and he bent immediately, kissing her before the sound fully faded. Slowly. Deeply. The kind of kiss that still made her knees weak after five years of marriage. When he finally lifted his head, his forehead rested against hers.

“I meant what I said in that hospital.”

“I know.”

"No." His hand slid over the curve of her stomach, possessive and tender all at once. "I need you to understand it properly. Before you, I survived life. That's all. I worked. I built things. I existed." His voice lowered. "You gave me this."

Rosewood.

Oliver asleep down the hall.

Their daughter growing safely beneath Grace's heart.

A family.

Love.

Everything he had once sworn never to need.

The baby suddenly kicked hard beneath his hand. Grace startled softly. John went completely still. Then his expression transformed. No one else ever saw this version of him. This absolute wonder.

"There she is," he murmured.

Grace smiled through sudden tears. "She adores your voice already."

"As she should. I'm magnificent."

She laughed helplessly. "There's the ego again."

"It's one of my better qualities."

His large hand remained spread protectively over her stomach, feeling every tiny movement. Then his gaze lifted back to hers.

"You scared me enough for one lifetime, Grace."

She rose onto her toes and kissed him softly.

"No promises, Mr. Sneddon."

His eyes darkened immediately.

"Careful," he murmured. "You're flirting with a man who's been very patient for several medically enforced weeks."

Grace's cheeks flushed warmly. Her arms slid around his neck, fingers brushing through the dark hair at his nape.

"And what would it take for you to stop being patient?"

His eyes darkened instantly.

"Very little."

"Good," she whispered softly, moving closer against him despite the curve of her stomach between them. "Because I've been feeling neglected."

His smile was slow and devastating.

"Neglected?" he repeated, one brow lifting. "That's an interesting accusation from a woman who currently has an entire medical team threatening my life if I so much as let her carry groceries."

"You've become unbearable."

"I've become cautious."

"You hover."

"You nearly died."

Her expression softened immediately at the rough edge beneath the words. John's hands slid carefully over her back, pulling her fully against him, his forehead lowering briefly to hers.

"You frightened me badly, Grace," he admitted quietly.

"I know."

"No, you don't." His voice deepened. "You have absolutely no idea what seeing you unconscious did to me."

She touched his face gently.

"I'm here."

"Yes," he said softly, eyes locked onto hers. "You are."

The silence stretched between them, intimate and heavy with everything they didn't need to say anymore. Five years ago, John would have hidden

feelings like weakness. Now Grace knew every shadow in him. Knew exactly how deeply he loved. His hand moved possessively over the swell of her stomach.

"And before you start trying to seduce me," he said darkly, "I should warn you I've spent the last three weeks sleeping beside my beautiful wife while touching was practically forbidden."

A small laugh escaped her. "Practically forbidden?"

"The doctor used the phrase 'take it easy.'"

"And naturally you interpreted that as monastic suffering."

"I interpreted it as a personal attack."

Grace laughed properly then, the sound warm and breathless. God, he loved making her laugh. John's gaze dropped slowly to her mouth. The amusement faded from his expression first. Then the air changed entirely.

"You know," he said quietly, "you're standing there in that tiny little nightgown looking entirely too pleased with yourself for a woman supposedly recovering."

Her pulse skipped.

"And you're looking at me like you're planning something."

"I am planning something."

"John…"

His hands tightened slightly at her waist.

"You have any idea what you do to me?" he murmured against her lips. "Still?"

A soft shiver moved through her. Even pregnant. Even exhausted. Even after years of marriage. Still. Always still.

"You're very beautiful when you blush," he added softly.

"You make me blush constantly."

"That sounds like encouragement."

"It absolutely is."

His low laugh wrapped around her like heat. Then he kissed her. Slowly at first. Carefully. But the restraint in him was fragile tonight. Grace felt it immediately in the way his mouth deepened against hers, in the rough sound that escaped him when her fingers slid into his hair.

One large hand spread protectively over her stomach while the other settled at the small of her back, holding her against him with unmistakable possession. His child beneath his hand. His wife in his arms. His entire world. John lifted his head just enough to look at her, breathing unevenly.

"You are going nowhere near another staircase alone again."

Grace smiled against his mouth.

"That's your takeaway from this moment?"

"Yes."

"You're impossible."

"And you adore me."

Her eyes softened.

"Yes," she whispered. "I really do."

For one suspended moment, something vulnerable flickered openly across his face. Not fear this time. Not control. Just love. Deep enough to ruin him. Then his thumb brushed gently across her cheek.

"Bed," he said quietly.

Grace blinked up at him innocently. "To sleep?"

His smile returned immediately. Slow. Male. Dangerous.

"Not remotely."

"About time," she whispered.

A low sound escaped him then—half laugh, half something far rougher.

"Careful, Mrs. Sneddon," he murmured, sliding one hand possessively over the curve of her stomach. "You're already pushing the limits of my self-control."

Grace smiled against his mouth. "I seem to remember you claiming you had excellent self-control."

"I lied."

"You? Never."

His eyes darkened at the teasing in her voice. God, he loved this version of her. Warm. Safe. Laughing in his arms instead of lying pale and unconscious on a hospital floor. The memory hit him suddenly and hard enough that some of the amusement faded from his expression. Grace saw it immediately. Her fingers softened against the back of his neck.

"John…"

"I still see it sometimes," he admitted quietly. "You on that floor."

Her heart tightened.

"You saved me."

His jaw flexed.

"No. The doctors saved you." His gaze locked onto hers. "I was useless."

"You were terrified."

"Yes."

The blunt honesty of it made her chest ache. Five years ago, John would rather have bled out than admit fear. Now he gave her truths no one else would ever hear. Grace kissed him softly.

"You carried me to the ambulance while holding Oliver," she whispered. "Jenny said you terrified half the emergency department."

"That sounds accurate."

"She also said you threatened a consultant."

“He was moving too slowly.”

A laugh escaped her before she could stop it. John’s expression finally softened again at the sound.

“There’s my girl,” he murmured.

His thumb brushed gently across her cheek before he kissed her once more, deeper this time, his restraint visibly fraying. Grace melted against him instantly.

“God,” he muttered roughly against her lips. “Do you have any idea how long these weeks have been?”

“You have been extraordinarily dramatic.”

“My pregnant wife collapsed and stopped breathing properly. I think I earned dramatic.”

“You banned me from stairs.”

“You clearly can’t be trusted with them.”

“I’m fairly certain most people manage stairs without executive supervision.”

“You lost your privilege.”

She laughed again, and John caught the sound with another kiss, slower now, more intimate than hungry. The baby kicked sharply between them. Grace startled with a little gasp. John froze. Then looked down at her stomach with complete outrage.

“She interrupted me.”

“Our daughter already has excellent timing.”

“She already enjoys ruining my plans.”

Grace smiled helplessly as he crouched slightly, placing both hands possessively over the curve of her stomach.

"You," he informed the baby sternly, "have inconvenienced me enormously for six months."

Another kick answered him instantly. Grace burst into laughter. John looked genuinely offended.

"Oh, she's definitely yours."

— The End —

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