

## **After Death 8**

### Chapter 8

Olivia looked at the paper in her hand. It was the address of a cemetery.

Was Ethan's sister dead?

Even so, what did her father have to do with her death?

If anyone were to know what kind of person her father was, it would be Olivia. And she knew he was not one to harm others, let alone a young woman.

She knew that Brent and Kelvin would not disclose more information and decided to stop probing them. It was silent all the way to the Millers' residence. Olivia had mixed feelings when they arrived.

Brent politely asked her, "Mrs. Miller, would you like to go inside?"

"No, thanks. I'll wait for him here."

This was the final time she would meet him, and it was only to settle their divorce. She did not want to cause more trouble for herself. Besides, every single thing in there would remind her of their time together, and she refused to reminisce about the past.

He was to blame for cherishing her so much back then. Even though he had become colder and more indifferent to her over time, she would never forget how kind and loving he had been.

He should have been someone she hated to the core, but she could not find it in her heart to do so.

The ignition was not turned off, and the inside of the car was warm and comfortable. She was the only one left in the car now.

Her stomach started to hurt again, and she curled up into a fetal position and waited for the sky to brighten up. After that, she shifted into a position where she hugged her knees tightly to her chest.

It was winter, so the days were short and the nights long. It was already seven in the morning now, yet the sky was still rather dark. The leaves had fallen from the apple tree in the garden, making her thoughts drift off to some time in the past.

During the apple season, she yearned to have a taste of apple cider. Knowing this, Ethan helped to pick the fruits for her.

Back then, the Ethan she knew was amiable and approachable. He was an excellent cook, and he spoiled her like a princess.

As her thoughts wandered, she found herself walking alone toward the tree. It was still there, as it had been back then.

But everything had changed, including the man she'd been with. Even the tree had changed; only a couple of dried leaves hung from the branches now. Its sorry state resembled her current relationship with Ethan.

As Ethan walked out of the mansion, the same sight greeted him. A woman wearing a thin knitted shirt stood watching the apple tree from below. A gentle breeze blew, gently tousling her hair.

The weather was way better today than the past few days. The first rays of the sun cast its glow on her face.

Her fair skin glowed under it, making her look like a fairy who would vanish into thin air in the blink of an eye. Her hands were bandaged, but her countenance was pale, and she still wore the clothes she wore last night.

"Ethan." She did not look at him but was able to sense his presence.

"Mhmm?" He hummed.

Slowly, Olivia turned to face him. They stood close to each other, yet their hearts were far apart.

"I want to drink the apple cider you made one last time."

Ethan was taken aback and took some time to respond. "The apple season has passed. Stop wasting your time," he said, emotionless.

Olivia's eyes looked a little puffy as she muttered, "Can you treat it as my last request before our divorce?"

She seemed to have changed a lot in just three months. He turned to look at the barren tree. In a slightly softer tone, he told her, "The frozen ones from last year aren't fresh. Let's see how it goes next year."

Next year ...

Olivia brushed her fingers on the rough bark of the tree. She wouldn't be able to wait for another year. "You must hate me a lot, right?"

"Yes."

"Then ... will you be happy if I die?" She turned to face him and spoke softly.

His heart skipped a beat at her words, and his thoughts became empty. For a moment, it felt like he had lost his mind.

After some time, he recomposed himself and calmly said, "Fine. It's just some apple cider. Come on in."

Olivia watched as he entered the house, the corner of her lips turning up into a smile. "Are you afraid of me dying?" she thought to herself.

All of a sudden, she thought of taking revenge on him. She wondered what kind of expression he would wear when he received the news about her death one day. Would he be glad or upset?

Ethan took out the box of frozen apples from the fridge to defrost. Olivia watched as he busied himself in the kitchen, thinking ruefully that this was probably the last time he would cook for her.

At least it was something worth remembering.

She crouched by the fireplace and started roasting marshmallows. The sweetness permeated the air, reminding her of how Ethan's grandmother would never fail to rush over when she smelled roasted marshmallows in the winter.

The old lady treated Olivia really well, as if she were her own granddaughter. Sadly, she passed away two years ago. Ethan's grandfather then moved overseas to prevent himself from being constantly reminded of his loss.

The once cozy mansion now stood cold and empty. Ethan's grandmother was no longer here to rob Olivia of her roasted marshmallows too, and that made Olivia feel empty inside.

After finishing the roasted marshmallows and gulping down a glass of warm water, she felt that her stomach did not hurt as much as before. She could smell the pleasant scent of food from the kitchen.

Olivia walked over to find Ethan pouring some of the soup into a thermos flask and into a bowl.

Since when had she fallen from being his priority and one and only?

She asked herself that question. Yet, she continued to turn a blind eye to the truth of their relationship by reminding herself of how sweet he was to her in the past.

"The apple cider is ready," Ethan said, unaware of her dampening mood.

“Thank you.” Olivia stared at the mug in her hands. It tasted just the same as before, but she had already lost her appetite for it. “It’s late. Let’s head to the City Hall.”

Ethan looked somewhat annoyed. “Aren’t you going to drink it?”

“I don’t feel like it,” Olivia said.

Back then, he would have coaxed her with all the patience he had. Now, he simply glanced at her and poured the cider into the sink.

His face was like a blank slate when he walked past her and said, “Let’s go.”

“Send this to Collington Cove,” Ethan said as he passed the thermos flask to Brent.

“Alright, Mr. Miller.”

It was at this moment that Olivia knew that there was nothing she could do to mend the tear in their relationship. The year she spent trying to fix things was nothing but a joke.

Olivia quickly walked to the car. As she passed the apple tree, the wind blew, and the last leaves of the tree fell from its branches.

Olivia raised a hand to catch one of the leaves. Softly, she said to herself, “What are you even holding on to?”

Then she tossed it to the ground and crushed it beneath her feet.

She closed the door of the car. Even though it was warm inside, just the way that she and Ethan sat at both ends of the passenger seat—like the North and South Poles—was enough to have the air feel as chilly as the weather outside.

The journey to the City Hall was smooth and without much traffic. It was as if God was paving the way for their divorce because the traffic lights were green all the way.

As the car was taking a turn at the intersection, nearing their destination, Ethan's phone started ringing. Marina's voice came from the other end of the line.

"Ethan, Connor's down with a fever. I didn't want to disturb you, but his fever is now at 103 degrees. I'm so scared. Hurry over—"

"I'm coming." Ethan hung up, his eyes meeting Olivia's gaze.

Her eyes were glassy, but the hatred in them was as clear as day. She spoke slowly, enunciating each word. "What's the child's name?"