

## Ambush OTQ 1351

### Chapter 1351 She Is His Lifeline

"I

I guarantee it!" Caleb snapped impatiently. "If you keep blabbering, I'll be the first to call the precinct, and you can watch them deal with you!"

"Alright, can I pick up the car this afternoon?"

"I'll transfer the case to the substation," Benjamin said sternly. "Talk to Mr. Sheraton about it."

Diesel pushed Emmeline over and said, "Alright! It's a deal!"

Benjamin reached out to catch Emmeline and asked with a lowered head, "Are you okay?"

Emmeline cleared her throat and blushed deeply

Benjamin examined her badly bruised neck and frowned. "I'll take you to the hospital."

After leaving the hospital's outpatient department, Emmeline felt a bit dazed, and her neck was still throbbing. The swollen area had been treated and wasn't a major concern.

"I didn't expect it to turn out this way," Benjamin said. I'm sorry for dragging you into this."

"No one could have expected it. I'm still a bit bewildered." Emmeline admitted, feeling scared now that the adrenaline was wearing off.

"That was incredibly scary." Sam commented, sticking out her tongue. "It was just like in the movies."

Emmeline turned to Benjamin and asked, "What's the deal with them?"

"That guy, Diesel, he was released after serving his sentence and borrowed money to buy a Steyr truck for transportation. He didn't have the proper permits and was caught by my squad," Benjamin explained.

"So, how are you planning to deal with him?" Emmeline inquired, curious about the situation.

"If we dig deeper into this, it will implicate many people." Benjamin replied. "There will be a long list of people responsible for this."

"Wouldn't there be significant profits involved in such activities?" Sam asked with wide eyes.

"Of course, it's a lucrative business involving the transportation authority and the drivers,"

Sam nodded and remarked, "You're quite skilled; I couldn't even see clearly how you managed to toss that driver out."

"I spent seven" in the military," Benjamin said with a wry smile. "I retained some of those skills."

Benjamin drove the two of them back to Altney Steel. After saying goodbye to Sam at the community gate, Emmeline headed home. She noticed Abel's car parked downstairs as she approached their building.

Emmeline's heart raced with a mix of happiness and anxiety. She knew what would happen when Abel noticed the injury on her neck. He had a fiery temper, especially when it came to her safety.

Her dad hadn't returned from work yet, and Abel said her mom had gone grocery shopping. Emmeline decided to sneak back into her room.

"Where's your phone?" Abel asked, his expression dark. "I've called a hundred times, and it's off?"

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Emmeline suddenly realized she must have left it at the seafood restaurant in all the chaos. Off? That meant someone might have taken it.

"Your phone is off, and the school office said you've taken five days off. You didn't come back after work. Emma, what kind of game are you playing? Don't you know how worried you've made everyone?" Abel

scolded.

Emmeline lowered her head, about to speak, when Abel noticed the red swelling on her neck. He rushed to her, cradling her face in his hands, his eyebrows furrowing deeply. "You're hurt? What happened? Tell

me."

"It's not something I can explain in a few words," Emmeline suddenly felt overwhelmed. It was as if Diesel was still gripping her neck.

As tears welled up in her eyes, Emmeline pushed Abel's hand away and turned to her bedroom. She needed to change her clothes quickly, opting for something with a high collar to prevent her parents from seeing the injury.

Abel was taken aback by her reaction. He reached out and pulled her close, holding her in his arms. "Emma, tell me! Who did this to you?"

"No one!" Emmeline furrowed her brows. "It was just an accident! I'm really tired right now. I'll tell you later

Emmeline had a weakness-the more she needed to explain, the harder it was for her to find the right words. Sometimes, it was better to say nothing and escape quickly.

Abel knew that about Emmeline and decided to stop pressing for answers. He watched as she turned and headed toward the bedroom. At the doorway, she seemed to wipe away a tear.

Abel's heart tightened. What happened to her? How did she get that injury on her neck?

Emmeline was his lifeline, and he couldn't tolerate any harm coming her way.

#### Chapter 1352 He's Afraid of Losing Her

Abel furrowed his brow, recalling an incident from Emmeline's second year of high school.

It was a Sunday morning, and he was resting in his bachelor dormitory.

The security guard hurriedly knocked on his door. "Abel, your phone, there's an emergency at home!"

Abel quickly got up and opened the door. "What happened at home?"

"Your sister got hit by a car and is in critical condition at RetroHealth Community Hospital. They need you to go right away!"

"How did it happen?" Abel panicked. "Right, I'll go right away!"

He rushed back to the factory, hastily grabbed the pickup truck for delivering goods, and sped off to RetroHealth Community Hospital, which was several miles away.

Maxwell had yet to return from his business trip while Kimberly paced anxiously in the corridor.

Seeing Abel, Kimberly grabbed his arm. "Taylor was riding her bike with Emma when they got hit by a car. Taylor's okay, but Emma has a ruptured spleen and is bleeding heavily!"

Abel's mind raced. Massive bleeding? That could be life-threatening!

"What's the current situation?" he asked.

"She's in surgery, and Emma needs a blood transfusion! But the hospital doesn't have her blood type, and they're worried it might not arrive in time."

"What's Emma's blood type?"

"AB positive."

"It's the same as mine. Use mine for the transfusion!"

"Oh, thank you, Abel," Kimberly said with relief. "Emma has a chance now!"

Having informed the doctor, everything was ready in a matter of minutes.

Abel lay on the hospital bed next to the operating table, watching his own blood slowly flow into Emmeline's body through a transparent IV tube.

She had an oxygen mask on, and under the surgical drapes, she looked like a fragile baby.

Her pale face showed no signs of life, her eyes tightly shut, concealed beneath the shadow of her long eyelashes.

You have to wake up, Emma, Abel prayed. You have to wake up. You have to wake up!

For the entire three-hour surgery, this was the only thought, the sole belief that occupied Abel's mind.

The surgery ended, but it would take six more hours for the anesthesia to wear off.

As long as she endured these six hours, Emmeline would have successfully come back from the brink of death

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Time passed by, almost counting in seconds.

The following morning, Emmeline finally weakly opened her eyes and softly uttered her first words, "Abel..."

Abel choked up and burst into tears. He buried his head in the hospital bed's sheets to stifle his sobs.

Emmeline gently extended her hand and delicately stroked Abel's hair. "Abel," she whispered, "don't be afraid, I'm okay." Her voice still carried the innocence of her sophomore year in high school.

Abel lifted his head, unable to control his tears, and held Emmeline's small hand to his lips. After a moment, he sobbed, "Emma, I was so afraid, terrified that you wouldn't wake up."

"I knew you were waiting for me," Emmeline said softly. "I just couldn't open my eyes. Sometimes, I could hear your voice, and sometimes there was just emptiness. Now... I can finally see you."

Abel understood that the emptiness she mentioned was the state of unconsciousness.

He knew she had battled with the Grim Reaper several times, but Death had returned her, given her back

to him.

"Emma, if you hadn't woken up, I would have been lost too."

This once was more than enough. Abel realized what Emmeline represented in his life.

At the age of twelve, he lost his father and was abandoned by his mother.

When he ran back to his grandmother's house, and his mother was about to send him away again, he knelt and begged her not to abandon him. He promised not to trouble the family and that he could fend for himself.

Emmeline's arrival was the softest and happiest moment amidst all his hardships. He feared living a life without her.

After dinner, the two of them went to the community garden, and Emmeline told Abel about Benjamin's situation.

Abel furrowed his brows slightly. "That Diesel Parker. He can't be let off the hook just like that."

"I'm basically alright," Emmeline said. "It's a messy situation. Let them handle it themselves. Other than Benjamin, I don't want to see any of them."

"Sorry?" Abel tilted his head, looking at her. "Benjamin?"

Chapter 1353 Go on a Business Trip With You

"Yeah, Benjamin is a good guy, very honest," Emmeline said.

“You’re not developing a crush on him, are you?” Abel furrowed his brow.

“What are you talking about?” Emmeline retorted. “You’re not allowed to stop me from praising someone else!”

“From the way you’re talking, it sounds like you want to see him.”

“Don’t twist my words!” Emmeline clenched her fist.

Seeing her genuinely annoyed expression, Abel chuckled and hugged her tightly. “I’m just teasing you! I just think someone with Benjamin’s character will have it tough in today’s society.”

“Being principled and having guidelines in life is better than being a fair-weather friend who goes wherever the wind blows,” Emmeline said with conviction.

Abel laughed. “Where does a kid like you get these theories?” Then he asked, “Why did you take the day off today?”

about the morning’s events, Emmeline felt a bit embarrassed and reluctantly described her encounter” with Abel.

“How am I going to face them in the future? It’s so awkward,” she said.

Abel chuckled. “Give it a few days, and they’ll forget all about it. They’re all seasoned folks with thick skin.

Hearing him say that, Emmeline giggled and felt her mood lighten.

She hugged Abel’s neck, looking playful. “How about I go on a business trip with you? Aren’t you going to Aberdeen?”

Abel’s business trip destination was the Commodity Wholesale Market in Sandwell, Aberdeen.

With Emmeline and a driver, they embarked on a seventeen-hour journey loaded with goods in an extended pickup truck.

They arrived in Sandwell in the evening.

The Sandwell Commodity Wholesale Market, which took shape in the 80s and saw significant growth in the 90s, was a hub for national commodities. Items such as clothing, leather, small household appliances, and electronic goods circulated here and were distributed throughout the country.

The first thing Abel did was buy Emmeline a Motorola flip phone. The compact model felt like a smooth piece of gem in her hand.

As Abel inserted the SIM card into the phone, he laid down three rules.

First, she couldn’t turn off the phone casually; if she had to, she had to send a message in advance.

Second, she couldn’t ignore calls; if she couldn’t answer, she must reply with a text message.

Third, she had to call him every afternoon before getting off work and report her safety. The essential element of this provision was “every day.”

The driver, Luca Elsher, burst into laughter, and Emmeline turned agitated. “These rules are like those of a tyrant! The first two are bearable, but the third one, who can adhere to that? Forget it. You can keep the phone!”

Abel raised the phone, looking down at Emmeline’s flushed, agitated face. “Are you sure?”

“I’m sure!”

“Okay, fine. Sandwell is pretty big. If you get lost, I won’t be able to find you, you know!”

Emmeline fell silent at once.

At that, Abel grabbed her hand and shoved the phone into her hand.

“But the third rule...” she muttered reluctantly.

“I’ll do it!” Abel said. “I’ll call you around 5:30 p.m. every day. You just have to answer.”

“Every day?” Emmeline gave him a sidelong glance.

“Every day!”

“Alright, deal!” Emmeline clenched the phone, thinking. Let’s see how long you can keep this up!

In the Sandwell Wholesale Market, the first person Abel wanted to find was Paul Murphy.

Paul, a native of Calcheth, was said to be an expert in divination.

In his forties, of medium to his appearance. At first glance, he looked pretty much like a local.

sight, and somewhat lean, he had a goatee that added a touch of sophistication

“Your factory’s pressure cookers are fine. I

take the whole order, but the electric kettles won’t work. They don’t have an edge,” Paul said calmly and confidently.

Abel asked, “How do you mean?”

“Pressure cookers rely on safety features, and your products have no issues regarding materials and workmanship. The price is also reasonable, which is a product advantage. However, the electric kettles are somewhat heavy and clumsy, contradicting their lightweight and quick attributes.”

At that, Paul picked up an electric kettle from another manufacturer. “Look at this one, It’s elegant and aesthetically pleasing, and it heats up quickly. If a housewife had to choose between these two kettles. which one do you think she’d pick?”

Abel replied, “In terms of heating speed and appearance, she would choose this one.”

“But in terms of durability, she would choose ours, right?” Emmeline chimed in.

Paul smiled. "With quick heating and convenience, that's enough to close the deal. From a business perspective, how does the market keep cycling if a kettle lasts for eight or ten years?"

Chapter 1354 Fortune Telling

Abel nodded thoughtfully.

"That's absolutely right, Emmeline said. "Ten years of schooling can't compare to a single piece of your advice."

Paul guffawed. "You can top an exam in three years, little girl, but it takes ten years to become a true entrepreneur."

Emmeline asked, "They say there's no business without deceit. Is that true?"

"In warfare, one must use deception, and in business, some level of cunning is necessary. If you view 'cunning' and 'deceit here as strategy, it takes on a different meaning." Paul explained.

Emmeline couldn't help but give a thumbs up. "Impressive!"

Paul turned to Abel with a smile and said, "Your sister is pretty adorable!"

Paul selected the location for dinner while Abel handled the food arrangements. They ordered several specialty dishes from Sandwell, including fish cake, duck confit, crab rangoon, and pan-fried asparagus.

Abel picked a few vegetarian dishes and placed them on Emmeline's plate.

Paul remarked, "If the young lady prefers lighter flavors, both the fish cake and crab rangoon should suit her."

"Emmeline's a born vegetarian, Abel chuckled.

"No wonder," Paul replied.

"What do you mean?" Abel asked.

"She's an extraordinary person, blessed with great fortune," Paul said.

Emmeline put down her cutlery and blinked. "Mr. Murphy, what do you mean?"

"Your facial features, bone structure, and aura all indicate that you are exceptionally blessed," Paul explained.

On the other side of the table, Luca asked, "Mr. Murphy, can you read palmistry?"

"A little bit." Paul chuckled. "A holistic doctor can read faces after years of practice, and a merchant of ten years can predict fortunes."

At that, Luca quickly extended his hand to Paul. Paul held his four fingertips and examined his palm carefully but remained silent.

"What's wrong with me, Mr. Murphy?" Luca asked. "Say something."

"Luca," Emmeline smiled, "Mr. Murphy is saying your good days are ahead. Live well and work hard!"

"Is that what he means?" Luca was persistent.

Paul nodded, "Emmeline got it right."

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Abel chuckled, and Luca didn't press the issue any further.

Paul casually took Abel's hand and examined it, then looked down. "Oh, a woman in your palm, you'll be immensely wealthy."

"A woman in my palm?" Abel's heart skipped a beat.

Emmeline grabbed Abel's hand, asking, "How did you figure that out?"

Paul used his fingertip to draw a line in Abel's palm. Both of them could see that there was an obscure 'W' on his palm.

"Wow! You're truly amazing!" Emmeline widened her eyes and promptly extended her hand as well. She had a mole in her palm that had been there since she was young.

Paul said, "Moles are a symbol of wealth and power, but.."

Paul turned to Abel. "Emmeline will face a difficult period in about five years, with more bad luck than good. You need to take good care of her."

Although Abel didn't believe it entirely, the words "more bad luck than good" pierced his heart like a sharp.

blade.

"Is there any way to mitigate it?" Abel asked.

"Because she was a born vegetarian, she had spared many lives unknowingly. This is her merit, and she has divine protection. Also, within the next two years, she will have recurring dreams. If she pays close attention, she can capture valuable information," Paul explained.

Abel furrowed his brows involuntarily.

"Mr. Murphy," Emmeline said, "We came to talk business with you, not for fortune-telling! I can't possibly share all my dreams with my brother every day, right?"

Paul guffawed.

gone off-topic!"

"More than off-topic, we've gone way off track," Emmeline noted, seeing the concern in Abel's expression.

"Your brother cares deeply about you, young lady. That's your blessing!" Paul said.



"In that case, Mr. Murphy, please introduce some good business opportunities to my brother," Emmeline smiled and, trying to please him, refilled his tea.

"Alright, for your sake, I do have an opportunity for Mr. Ryker," Paul said. "Later, visit my warehouse; there's a bulk processing job for a new product. Let's see if you can take it on."

#### Chapter 1355 Seize the Chance To Start a Business While Young

Paul's new product was a smoothie blender, which was quite rare in the market and not commonly found in households.

"The machine cover is made of stainless steel. Once the product goes into production, there will be orders worth tens of millions. By then, only two or three factories certainly won't be able to meet the demand," Paul explained. "If you pre-process some samples and get them to the manufacturer for evaluation, once they meet the standards, I'll direct more orders your way. Additionally, there will be high-volume production of components like rice cooker inner pots in the future."

Abel took the machine cover and said, "Please provide me with the blueprints and data, Mr. Murphy. I don't think this will be a problem."

"Another critical point. Your cost calculations should pass muster while maintaining the same quality. If you exceed the manufacturer's expectations in terms of cost, no matter how good the quality is, they won't accept it."

Abel nodded and said, "I understand this well."

"To be honest," Paul continued, "State-owned factories are not as advantageous in this regard as private enterprises. State-owned enterprises have high labor costs and low production efficiency. You'll need to overcome this weakness."

At that, the conversation with Tony regarding contracting factories came to Abel's mind.

"When do you need this order?" he asked Paul.

"Within half a year, most of the product's experimental indicators should be passed. Once this product is completed successfully, the next one will be accessories for slow cookers, which also have a huge demand!

"Okay, I'll take this sample back with me, and you can send me the blueprints and data later. Next time I visit, I'll bring our samples for you to review."

"Sounds good! I'll be waiting for you!"

Abel added, "Perhaps I'll change the brand."

"Which brand are you thinking of changing to?"

"If everything goes well, I might use my own brand."

"I have faith in you!" Paul patted Abel on the shoulder. "Seize the opportunity to start a business while you're young!"

Before leaving Sandwell, Paul saw them off, and he said to Emmeline, "Many young ladies your age come to Sandwell to do clothing business. It's a trend, and if you're interested, you can give it a try."

Emmeline was puzzled, "How can I do that?"

"I have many clothing and luggage manufacturers on my side with large inventories. All you need to do is take the goods back and lease a storefront in your area to sell them. The manufacturers will provide some initial credit, and you can adjust and settle the inventory sequentially. It's very easy to get started."

Emmeline turned her gaze toward Abel.

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"We'll discuss it when we get back," Abel said. "It's not something we can't consider."

On the way back, Luca drove the truck for the first 180 miles.

After lunch, they switched drivers, and Abel took the wheel. Emmeline sat next to Abel, gazing at his sharply defined cheekbones and tightly pursed lips. Admiration filled her heart.

Seeing that Luca had fallen asleep, Emmeline leaned over to Abel and kissed his cheek. "You look so handsome like this, Abel!"

"Don't do that!" Abel warned in a hushed tone. "The safety and lives of three people are in my hands!"

Emmeline shrugged and sat up properly.

"Are you suffering from motion sickness?" Abel asked, taking a gander at her.

"I'm okay," Emmeline replied.

"You're doing much better than when you were a kid," Abel remarked. "I remember the first time I brought you back from our hometown: you were completely out of it, and you threw up all over me."

Emmeline's memory instantly flashed back to that summer when she was fourteen. At the end of the school vacation, Abel had brought her back to the city. During the long journey, she had either been vomiting from motion sickness or sleeping while feeling nauseous. The entire trip had been spent curled up in Abel's arms.

It was during that time that she had formed a habit. Whenever she snuggled into Abel's embrace, she would fall asleep almost instantly. Abel's embrace was her safest haven.

Emmeline thought, I wish you could hold me like this forever. But the reality was that they were relatives, and such a thing was impossible. She couldn't help but let out a soft sigh.

"What's troubling you? We'll be home another half day," Abel said.

"I'd rather not go home and just keep going like this," Emmeline said quietly to herself.

As drowsiness gradually overcame her, she yawned and fell asleep. She wasn't sure when her phone rang.

Emmeline woke up, wondering who would be calling her on this new number.

It was Abel.

She was about to ask, "Why are you calling? Don't you have anything better to do?" when she realized Abel wasn't in the vehicle at all.

She looked around and found the truck parked by the roadside while Abel and Luca were sitting on the roadside embankment, facing a vast expanse of green fields, smoking.

"What are you doing, Abel?" Emmeline shouted. "Why are you calling when you're right here?"

Chapter 1356 The Dangerous Outside World

"You've been sleeping for over two hours; be careful not to have trouble falling asleep tonight!" Abel sat on the roadside and said, "Did you forget our agreement? Today is only the first day."

Emmeline suddenly remembered Abel's three rules when he bought the phone for her.

"But I'm right here with you."

"It doesn't matter. I will make it a routine to call at 5:30 p.m. to you every day!"

"You're really something!" Emmeline pouted. "Whatever floats your boat!"

"Emma, come out and stretch a bit," Abel said, extinguishing his cigarette and getting up to carry Emmeline out of the car. "We'll find a county town about an hour ahead, where we can stay overnight and have dinner. We should be home by tomorrow night."

After a brief rest, Luca took the wheel, and they drove for another hour and a half. At a little past 7 p.m., as the sky grew darker, they finally reached a county town

Abel visually assessed a "park and stay" establishment by the roadside and asked Luca to check it out. Luca quickly returned, shaking his head, and said, "No good. They have that."

"It looks quite clean, Emmeline said. "What's wrong?"

"Don't ask, you're too young," Abel said.

As Luca started the truck, two scantily clad young women came out of the "park and stay" courtyard, waving their hands at Abel while lifting their skirts.

Abel immediately pressed Emmeline's head into his chest.

When Emmeline raised her head again, she had a moment of epiphany. Those two women were not wearing underwear under their skirts, were they?

They continued driving. The county town was very small, and within a few minutes, they reached the end." They made a U-turn and checked out two more places.

At the third establishment, Luca said, "This one will do."

Abel got out of the car to take a look. It seemed to be a county-owned inn, clean but quiet.

He returned to the car and said, "Let's go with this one

They parked the car in the backyard and booked two standard rooms. Then, they went to choose a restaurant for dinner.

The restaurant was quite ordinary but appeared clean. It had three large rooms and two rows of outdoor stalls. They ordered several dishes, all of which Emmeline liked.

Luca was a carnivore and ordered a large plate of lamb. He also wanted to get some beer but was stopped by Abel.

"Don't overdo it. Don't you know where we're at?" Abel said. "We'll drink to our hearts' content when we get back."

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Luca glanced at Emmeline. "You see that, Emmeline? Your brother is quite bossy!"

"You're just realizing that?" Emmeline chuckled. "I've known that for over a decade."

Just then, about half a dozen young men entered the restaurant, all around their twenties. Two of them were shirtless, covered in tattoos of oriental dragons and tigers, and were quite loud and rowdy. They stood by the entrance, scanning the entire hall, seemingly recognizing everyone inside.

"Boss, business is good today!" one of the young men with an oriental tiger tattoo on his arm exclaimed.

"Yeah, business is good!" the owner responded as if they all knew each other.

Abel handed his wallet to Luca and whispered, "Pay the bill." He then took Emmeline's hand and led her out.

Luca clutched the wallet and walked toward the counter to settle the clearly overpriced bill, cursing silently in his mind.

After paying the exorbitant bill, Luca muttered to himself while making his way out.

Suddenly, a leg extended from under a nearby table and tripped Luca, causing him to stumble and fall face down.

"You d'mn idiot!" Luca cursed loudly, then quickly got up, threw a punch, and hit the person who tripped him right in the eye.

Four or five men immediately pounced on Luca and pinned him to the ground.

Abel, who had just reached the exit, realized something was wrong and warned Emmeline, "Emma, stay as far away as you can!"

He quickly turned back and entered the fight.

Emmeline watched in shock as she saw Abel fight like she had never seen before. Even the seemingly slender Luca wasn't a pushover!

As she witnessed five young men being subdued-three of them lying on the ground-the shortest one grabbed a long wooden stool and swung it toward Abel and Luca. The stool hit Luca, knocking him down, and then struck Abel on his left side, sending him flying several feet away.

Several of the young men grabbed the wallet and fled in panic.

Inside the restaurant, the other customers either quickly settled their bills and left or moved their seats farther away. It seemed like everyone understood that when you dabble in the outside world, it was better to avoid getting involved in unnecessary conflicts.

Emmeline rushed forward and knelt beside Abel, calling out anxiously, "Abel! Are you okay?"

Abel rolled over, his eyebrows furrowed, and said, "I'll live."

Chapter 1357 Watch Over

Instantly, Emmeline burst into tears, bawling.

Luca got up and helped Abel, asking, "Are you okay?"

"Luca, are you out of your mind?" Abel gritted his teeth. "Why didn't you just chuck them the wallet? There wasn't much inside it. We go out every day. How can you forget the rules?"

Luca slapped his head in frustration, saying, "I acted in haste and acted before thinking."

"We have Emma with us. What if something happens because of your impulsiveness?"

Abel got up but then bent over again with a cry of pain, involuntarily clutching his left rib.

"What's wrong?" Luca asked.

"My rib hurts. I think it's broken," Abel said, sweat dripping down his face.

Emmeline burst into tears again. "No, Abel! You have to be okay!"

"I'm fine," Abel said with a smile and pulled her into his arms. "I'm just joking."

Luca, however, saw Abel's face turning pale and understood that he was in extreme pain. He knew Abel's rib was indeed broken. Despite this, Abel waved at him, indicating that he should keep quiet. He didn't want Emmeline to worry any further.

The three of them hailed a three-wheeled motorbike on the roadside and returned to the hotel.

As they returned to the hotel, Luca was limping. It seemed that his right foot had been injured too.

Abel lay on the bed, his left side in pain, making him reluctant to move even an inch. His face was covered in cold sweat.

Emmeline prepared a towel, unbuttoned his shirt, and gently wiped his body, only to find a dark bruise covering his entire left side.

Tears rolled down her cheeks and dropped onto Abel's body.

"Silly girl, why are you crying? I'm perfectly fine." Abel smiled and reached out to wipe away her tears.

"Why aren't we going to the hospital?" Emmeline sobbed.

"This kind of injury isn't worth visiting a doctor here. I doubt there's even a decent hospital in this place."

"Is your rib really broken?" Emmeline asked with a trembling voice.

"No, it's not. I was just messing with you. It's just very painful, but a good night's rest will fix it."

"I'll watch over you tonight, then," Emmeline said with teary eyes.

"No, you'll suffer from motion sickness tomorrow if you don't rest properly, and with me in this condition,

I won't be able to take care of you if you get motion sickness."

"To hell with tomorrow. I can't relax until I see you asleep."

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"Alright, I'm worried about you being alone in the adjacent room too. Just stay here."

Emmeline took off her shoes and curled up on Abel's right side, extending her arm around his waist.

She closed her eyes, and tears continued to roll down her cheeks.

Abel seemed to have fallen into a deep sleep as well.

Luca, still concerned, lay on the other bed, keeping watch over the two of them.

In the middle of the night, Luca heard Abel let out a faint groan.

"Abel, what's the matter?" Luca asked softly.

"D"mn. it hurts so much," Abel whispered with gritted teeth. "Luca, I'll deal with you later."

"It's really on me this time. I acted on impulse. Spare me, Abel. If it weren't for you, they would have beaten me to death."

"With the three of us and the money we have, we have to swallow our pride if necessary. Don't be a hero. Have you forgotten the time we got robbed of half a load of goods?"

"How can I forget," Luca said. "It's on me for acting impulsive this time."

Abel groaned softly again.

Luca suggested, "Why don't you come over and sleep on this bed? Sharing with Emmeline might be tiring. for you."

"No need. I can't sleep anyway. What's more, this girl is sound asleep. I don't want to disturb her."

Emmeline's tears welled up in her eyes again.

The next morning, the three of them got up early. Luca bought breakfast.

Abel was feeling much better, although he had a slightly stiff waist, and from time to time, he would instinctively clutch his left side.

Abel teased Emmeline, "You cried so much that your eyes are now puffy. You don't look pretty anymore."

Emmeline bit into her bread, tears still welling up in her eyes again.

"A girl with many tears, indeed," Luca commented.

Emmeline knew full well that Abel had spent the whole night in pain without sleeping.

After breakfast, they hit the road, but their speed was slow.

"Luca, why are you taking your sweet time?" Abel complained. "Haven't you had enough of this sh\*thole?"

Luca didn't reply but slightly increased the speed. After about an hour and a half of driving, he parked the car by the side of the road.

Abel asked, "What's wrong"

Chapter 1358 Tenacious

Lúca landed a punch on the steering wheel and then slowly lifted his right foot, placing it on the dashboard. His ankle was visibly swollen and bruised, resembling a giant eggplant.

Abel and Emmeline were immediately stunned. It was evident that Luca had twisted his ankle during the fight last night, but he had kept it to himself.

"I really can't control the throttle and brakes anymore. Luca said dejectedly. "I can't feel my foot, and I worry about causing an accident."

"F\*ck," Abel cursed softly. "Are you trying to get us killed?"

Luca hung his head in silence, looking utterly defeated.

Abel picked up a water bottle and took several big gulps. Then he got out of the car, opened the driver's door, and shouted, "Get out of the car!"

Luca hung his head, almost on the verge of tears, and said, "I'm really sorry!"

Abel started the engine, ignited it, and the extended pickup truck instantly sped down the county road.

His face was covered in sweat, and only he knew how painful his ribs were. With one hand gripping the steering wheel and the other unbuttoning his shirt, he pulled it off halfway, revealing his torso as he continued to drive forcefully.

By the time they crossed the provincial line, it was already lunchtime, and there was a farmhouse restaurant along the county road.

After parking the car, they had lunch in the shade of a tree.

Abel's face was pale, and he had no appetite for food. He concentrated on carefully shucking corn for Emmeline.

"Abel.

you

should eat something. Skipping meals won't do you any good," Emmeline insisted.

"Don't worry about me. I can go without food for three days," Abel said with furrowed brows.

Emmeline picked up a garlic butter clam and fed it to him. When he ate it, she followed with a slice of corned beef.

With determination, she managed to feed him several bites of food.

"You two look like a couple from a fantasy novel, Luca remarked. "I feel so guilty; it's all my fault."

"Do you often encounter such incidents during your business trips?" Emmeline asked him.

The security situation has improved a lot in recent years," Abel said. "But in the early years when we started in sales, it was chaotic. We used to carry baseball bats under the car seats every day"

"Why would you do that?" Emmeline was puzzled.

"A baseball bat is a good weapon" Abel chuckled. "It's handy in a fight, packs a punch without being lethal!"

"I think you're just a violent guy! Emmeline teased, wrinkling her nose at him.

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Abel burst into laughter at her remark, but his laughter was quickly followed by a painful grimace as he clutched his ribs.

Emmeline was startled, and tears welled up in her eyes again.

"It's okay. It's okay," Abel said while gritting his teeth. He gently rubbed her head. "Don't be afraid. I'm a tough guy!"

After finishing lunch, the sun was scorching hot, so the three of them took a short rest.

Emmeline curled up in the front passenger seat while Abel and Luca spread a blanket on the sandy ground underneath the car and took a nap.

Luca's foot was feeling better by the afternoon, so they took turns driving. They returned to Altney at 9:20

p.m.



Luca drove back to the company, and along the way, he dropped the two of them off at the entrance to their community.

The next day, Emmeline and Abel went to the hospital for an X-ray, confirming that Abel had two broken ribs on his left side. Luckily, they were not displaced, and no surgical treatment was needed—rest and recovery would suffice.

Maxwell and Kimberly were unaware of the incident, and Emmeline understood that she couldn't tell her parents. They doted on Abel like their own son, and if they found out that Abel had been in a fight, they would be furious.

On Tuesday, Emmeline returned to school as scheduled and met Joseph and Ysabel. Both of them had indifferent expressions as if nothing had ever happened.

At 5:30 p.m., her phone rang. Emmeline stepped out of the office and answered it.

It was Abel's voice. "Did the... couple do anything to you?"

"No," Emmeline mumbled. "It's like I'm the one feeling guilty."

"That's good. Don't worry too much. In a few days, everyone will forget about it."

"Yeah." Emmeline nodded.

"Um... Have you had any strange dreams?" Abel asked. Emma, have you?"

"Abel!" Emmeline scolded him. "Don't be so superstitious. Mr. Murphy was probably just joking

"It's better to believe there's something rather than nothing." Abel said, sounding somewhat uneasy.

"Says the guy who dared to sleep in a graveyard as a child," Emmeline teased him. "If you're so scared, why don't you predict my future now?"

Chapter 1359 Date but Not Marry

"That's different. I'm concerned about your well-being, alright?" Abel sighed softly. "You don't know how afraid I am for your safety. I'd rather risk my life!"

"How about I start writing dream journals and send them to you every day?" Emmeline teased him.

"That works too," Abel chuckled.

"Forget it!" She changed the subject. "How are you feeling? Is your rib still hurting?"

He laughed. "It's not as painful anymore. I think it's healing. Don't worry. Your big brother is as tough as a

bull."

"You're something else, but you still need to take it easy" Emmeline said, feeling relieved.

"Yeah, I will. And you, be good and don't run around."

"But, Abel." Emmeline hesitated. "Mom's mental state isn't great, and I'm worried."

"Depression can be tough," Abel comforted her. "I'll inquire about esoteric medicine. We can try giving Mom herbal remedies."

"Okay, when are you coming home?"

"Whenever, I guess."

"Alright!"

After hanging up the phone, Emmeline couldn't help but feel grateful. Having an older brother, even if not biologically related, was so much better than having a sister.

Emmeline's older sister, Hannah, worked as an accountant at a chemical company in Ravenshell. She didn't spend much time at home, so she was only aware of their mother's condition but hadn't truly experienced it, let alone shared the concerns with Emmeline.

Speak of the devil. Hannah was home when Emmeline came home from work.

"Watch out, or you'll gain weight!" Emmeline teased her.

Emmeline knew that her sister had quite the appetite. Sweet, sour, bitter, spicy, or salty, she could handle it all. Emmeline once witnessed her sister devouring food at lightning speed, making them disappear in a matter of seconds. It was truly astonishing, and Emmeline was left dumbfounded.

Hannah was slightly shorter than her younger sister, with fair, plump, and radiant skin. Her jet-black hair was cut in a stylish bob.

This time, Hannah brought her boyfriend along. At twenty-three years old, it was her first time introducing a boyfriend to the family.

The young man was spirited, friendly-faced, of average height, and a good match for Hannah. His name was Henrick Grunt.

"Emma, what do you think of Henrick?" Hannah asked her sister while they were picking vegetables in the kitchen.

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"He's one of those naturally cheerful, kind-hearted types. He seems like a good man," Emmeline replied. with a smile.

"Mom said he seemed decent," Hannah said, her face filled with joy.

"I've been there. I believe I'm good at reading people. Kimberly's voice came from behind.

"Mom, you're only fifty. Don't act like an old lady," Hannah said. "There are ladies in their fifties at our workplace who are dating and still full of vitality!"

"I can't engage in such frivolous matters!"

"Those ladies' husbands passed away, and their children are grown up. They're just enjoying life by dating. older boyfriends. Isn't that living life to the fullest?"

Their mom then grabbed a celery stalk and playfully swatted Hannah on the buttocks. Emmeline burst into laughter.

"That's more like it!" Hannah still didn't give in. "Since I arrived, you've been wearing a serious face. I thought you were unhappy to see me."

"I'm thinking I don't have to worry about you now, but when will Emma put me at ease?"

"Emmeline has someone special." Hannah glanced at Emmeline and teased, "Mom, you don't need to worry about her."

Emmeline quickly pinched her sister. "You better mind your own business!"

Hannah stuck out her tongue and quickly closed her mouth.

After dinner, Hannah and Emmeline went for a walk. On their way back, Hannah asked, "How's Abel doing?"

"He's doing okay," Emmeline replied, kicking a small pebble on the path.

"Mom is actually worried about you. A mother knows her daughter best," Hannah said.

"So, please don't say anything you shouldn't."

"Abel is a really good person, very manly. I used to admire him when I was younger, but..."

Emmeline's heart sank; she knew what her sister was going to say.

"But his identity as our older brother can't change that fact."

"Hannah, I won't like anyone else," Emmeline said, feeling gloomy. "I've liked him since I was a child, and you know that."

"While we may not share blood with Abel, the fact remains that he's our older brother. In terms of family and lineage, it won't work."

"I think," Hannah concluded, "that you and Abel can love each other, but you can't get married"

Chapter 1360 Depression

"I don't have such a high state of mind," Emmeline said with melancholy, looking up at the sky. "I just want to be with Abel, whether it's in this world or another."

That night, Emmeline had a dream.

She dreamt that she was beneath a deep mountain cliff, with no one around for miles, The sky was vast and distant, and her cries echoed only within her hearing. She was filled with fear, took out her phone, and tried to dial Abel's number, but she couldn't make the call...

She woke up in fright from the dream, her body covered in cold sweat.

She couldn't help feeling that the cliff was a place that existed in real life.

The next day...

Morning exercise was part of Emmeline's routine.

After completing four laps of a five-hundred-meter run, her T-shirt was soaked with sweat.

"Oh, to be young," an older lady who was going about her morning exercise said with envy.

Emmeline jogged back home and found a bowl of oat porridge, a hard-boiled egg, and a bun her mother had prepared for her on the table.

Were eggs considered vegetarian or non-vegetarian?

Regardless, Emmeline didn't mind, so her mother insisted that she eat two every day.

"Mom, I'm heading to work."

After having her fill, Emmeline went to the balcony and handed her mother a cup of freshly brewed tea.

There were tears in her mother's eyes; she had been crying.

"Mom, what happened? It's only early in the morning. Emmeline's mind was suddenly clouded with worry.

"My coworkers were talking about me behind my back, and it hurt my feelings," Kimberly sobbed.

Emmeline was confused. "You've all been retired for two or three years now. Who has the time for such nonsense?"

"I knew you wouldn't believe me," her mother said, wiping away her tears.

"It was that year in the changing room when Jessica's wallet went missing, and the next day, they all looked at me strangely, suspecting me of being a thief," Kimberly said seriously.

A sense of panic washed over Emmeline. Has Mom's depression hit her again and worsened at that?

She knelt down in front of her mother, holding her knees.

"Mom, it's been many years since that incident. Those who are innocent have nothing to worry about. Why are you blaming yourself for something that happened so long ago?"

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"You and your father are just the same, never really listening to what I have to say!"

"Mom, you can't allow people to converse. It's been so many years that everyone has practically forgotten about it! Don't dwell on these things, please."

"I knew you wouldn't believe me! You also think I stole that wallet, don't you?!"

Emmeline was stunned, and she dared not speak further. She realized that her mother's depression had worsened, and her mental state was severely affected.

"Mom, what do you want me to do?" After a pause, she asked cautiously, "Should I take you to the hospital?"

"You silly child. I'm completely fine. Why go to the hospital?" Her mother gently ruffled her head. "It's time for you to go to school."

"Mom, did you have trouble sleeping again last night?"

"I don't know what it's like to feel sleepy anymore," her mother said. "My eyelids just won't close together."

"Why don't you lie down for a while now and take a rest?"

Emmeline noticed the dark circles and deep hollows under her mother's eyes.

"Okay, I'll rest when you leave for work, her mother agreed.

"Alright." Emmeline stood up to leave but couldn't help worrying. "Mom, for lunch, I'd like vegetarian taquitos. Can you make them at home? Don't go anywhere."

"Sure. her mother nodded. "You can have vegetarian ones, and your dad can have beef taquitos.

"We agreed. No going out anywhere, okay?"

"Yes!" Her mother smiled and nodded.

Emmeline finally left for school.

Emmeline's desk was right across Ysabel's. Ysabel was in her early thirties, very beautiful, with golden-brown curly hair and a captivating presence.

When Emmeline returned from a business trip to Sandwell, she had given Ysabel a dress, which seemed to have alleviated the awkwardness between them.

As the bell for class rang, Ysabel hastily left with her teaching materials. In the teacher's office, only Emmeline remained.

"Ysabel Hemmings! You witch, get out here!" Someone called from the corridor, and then a large woman stormed in like a whirlwind.

Ysabel Hemmings! You shameless woman!" The woman lunged at Emmeline and slapped her.